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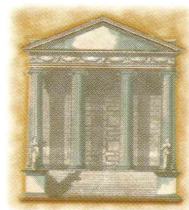
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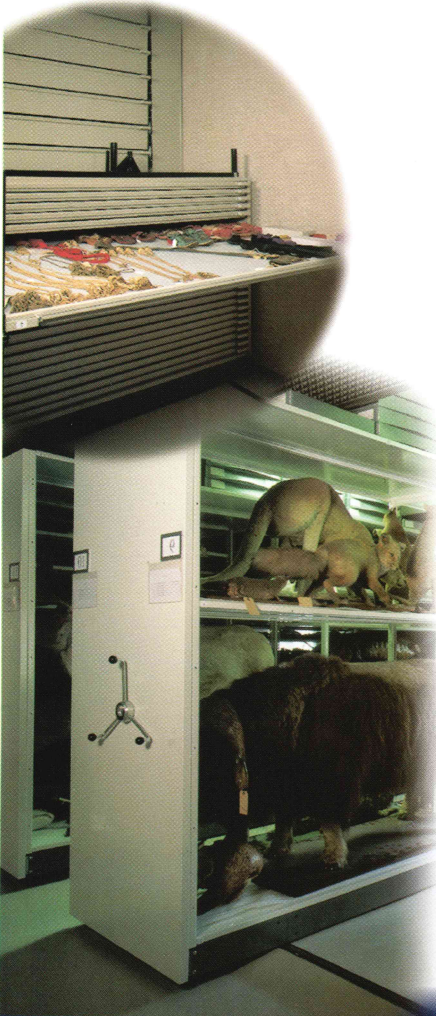
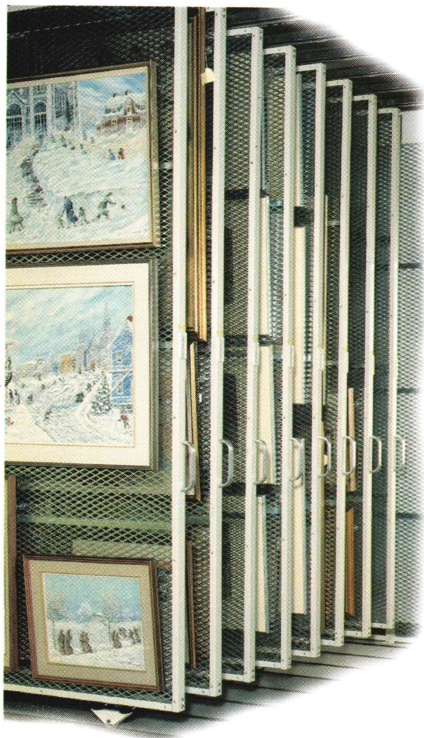


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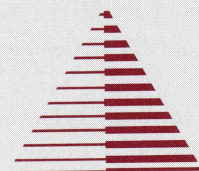
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On the cover (detail) and above: Charles Caleb Ward, *Force and Skill* (1869). From the collection of the Currier Gallery of Art, Manchester, N.H.

Museums Building Partnerships

Three recent success stories of museums partnering
with other organizations / 38

Conservation Center Stage

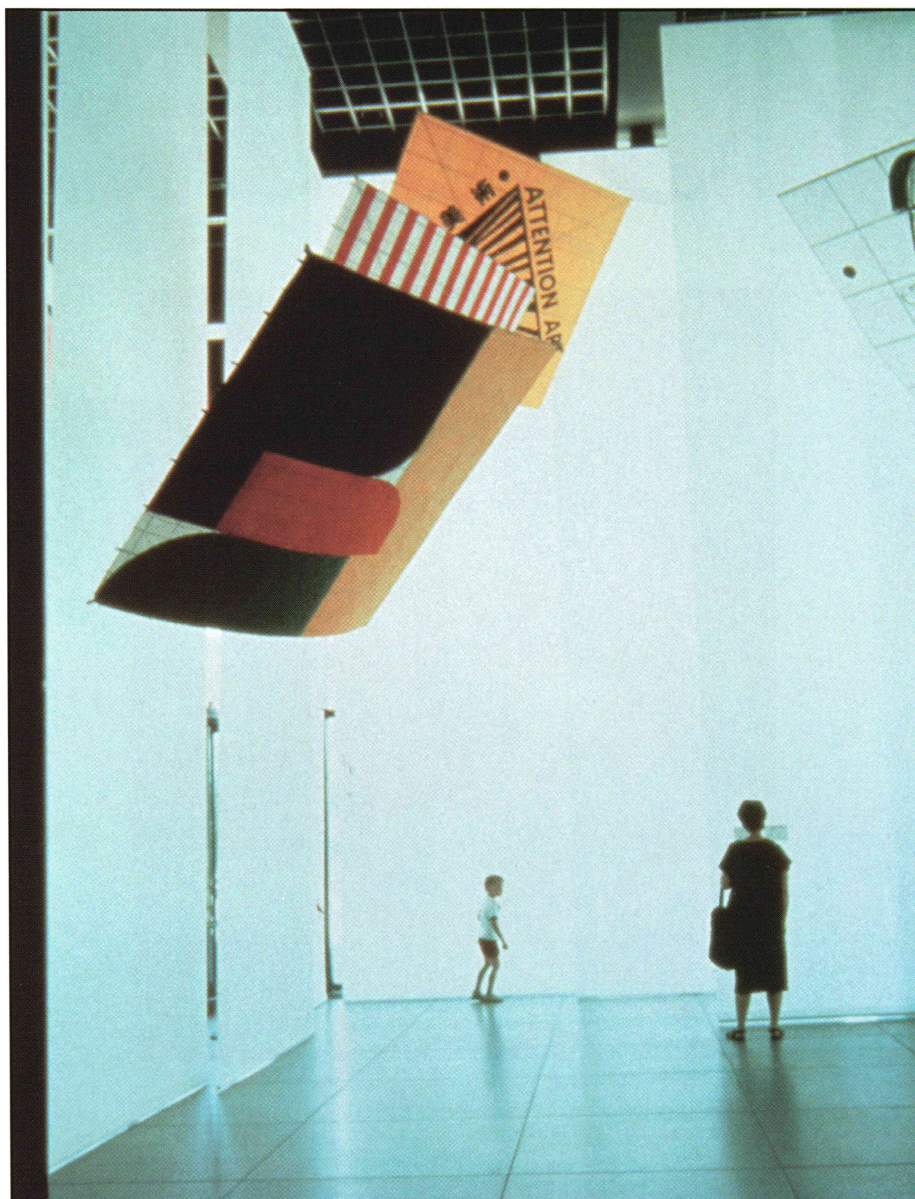
New public attention is focusing on the preservation
and restoration of cultural heritage

By Joyce Hill Stoner / 48

Forum: Modern Art—Making People Mad

How can museums handle the tension between public
expectation and expert opinion?

By Danielle Rice / 53



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Letters

Titanic Ethics

A decade ago, AAM testified before the U.S. House of Representatives on the issue of HR 74, The Abandoned Shipwreck Act. That testimony, which advocated a strong preservation ethic, stated in part, "This 'finders-keepers' system directly contradicts laws protecting archaeological sites on land that prohibit salvage, looting and commercial exploitation . . . [I]f commercial mining of these wrecks remains unchecked and they continue to fall prey to any and all who may assert claim to them, few historic underwater sites will be left for current and future generations of scholars, underwater explorers and enthusiasts, and the general public."

Since *Titanic* falls squarely into the category of salvaged shipwreck condemned by the AAM policy, it was a great surprise and disappointment to see no reference to it by Associate Editor Jane Lusaka in her March/April 1997 *Museum News* article, "Titanic: An In-Depth

Look." Nor did she mention the ethical problems surrounding the exhibit of salvaged *Titanic* materials within the museum community, which is a far greater controversy than the memorial issue. As a result of these omissions, the article makes AAM appear to support and condone the Memphis display of *Titanic* artifacts by the salvors and their partners.

The AAM policy is widely known and has been distributed worldwide over the past 10 years, forming the basis of archaeological bylaws for such professional museum associations as the Council of American Maritime Museums and the International Congress of Maritime Museums. It is an outstanding piece of writing, and your staff and AAM should be aware of it.

Paul F. Johnston
Curator of Maritime History
National Museum of American
History
Smithsonian Institution
Washington, D.C.

For additional response to "Titanic: An In-Depth Look," please see page 29.—Ed.

Museum Equity

I found that Edward H. Able, Jr.'s piece entitled "Competition and Identity" in the March/April issue embodied many of my concerns regarding the museum profession.

I am an architect specializing in the design of museums, themed entertainment venues, zoos, aquariums, and visitor centers. Unlike Able, I do not dwell on whether these organizations are operated on a profit or nonprofit basis. For my colleagues and me, all of the above qualify as "cultural attractions."

Cultural attractions should be judged on what value they have to offer society, as well as how effectively they are delivering this value. We refer to this value as "equity." All museums have great equity in the stories and artifacts that they offer. In like fashion, themed entertainment

(Please turn to Letters, page 63)

Good Medicine.

D&P fabricated *Medicines: The Inside Story*, a 3,800 square-foot traveling exhibition that premiered at Atlanta's Fernbank Museum of Natural History and is currently on a four-city tour. The show presents the impact of medicine on U.S. history and features objects, interactive video, period graphics and functioning laboratory equipment. *Medicines* was designed by MFM and underwritten by Glaxo Wellcome.

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Notes

Coyote Springs: A New Museum Utopia?

It's what every museum wants—visitors who are deeply interested and involved in its programs. Imagine that ideal taken one step further—a devoted audience that actually *lives* on museum property. Such an unorthodox scenario may seem unlikely, but it is currently becoming a reality at the Museum of Northern Arizona (MNA) in Flagstaff.

Since he became director of the museum three years ago, Michael J. Fox has been bringing to fruition through a series of partnerships “a multi-generational community” on the institution’s 400-acre campus. As the most recent step towards realizing this vision, the museum has joined forces with a local restoration and development company to create “Coyote Springs,” a residential development on museum property to attract people interested in the museum’s programs. Currently, 17 plots of land are for sale in a 43-acre area.

Spanning both sides of the main highway that leads to the Grand Canyon, the Museum of Northern Arizona’s campus includes more than 30 buildings that house research facilities and collections focusing on the Colorado Plateau, the geological area encompassing parts of Arizona, Utah, Colorado, and New Mexico. Founded in 1928, the museum grew from the interests of a Philadelphia couple, Harold S. Colton and Mary-Russell Ferrell Colton, who were instrumental in pointing out the archaeological and research opportunities in the area and helped guide the museum’s expansion.



Residents of the Coyote Springs development on the Museum of Northern Arizona’s property will have a view of the San Francisco Peaks. Photo by Al Richmond.

Even during financial hard times in the mid-1980s, the MNA campus drew scientists from around the world. Today, scientists continue to come to conduct archaeological, paleontological, geological, and biological fieldwork. It was this reputation as a gathering place that Fox used to encourage the board to pursue his concept of a multi-generational community including everyone from teenagers to senior citizens.

The disrepair of a historic building on museum property helped move this vision forward. For many years the museum founders’ former home had been used to house museum directors. When Fox came to the museum, the Colton House was up for sale. He insisted that the museum keep the house, restore it, and raise money by holding events there. In a serendipitous coincidence soon after, local restoration pro-

fessional Edith Blackstone offered her services for free, and spent two years returning the eclectic Spanish Colonial Revival house to its appearance when the Coltons built it in 1929. When work was completed last year, Blackstone began talking to Fox about creating a residential neighborhood around the house.

Under the auspices of her company, Plateau Winds Corporation, Blackstone purchased the 43-acre area surrounding Colton House for residential development. (According to the museum and the real estate broker assisting in the sale of these lots, Blackstone does not stand to profit from this development.) Named after a nearby spring, the development has been subdivided into 19 lots, 17 of which are for sale, starting at \$150,000. The museum will receive a small portion of each sale to be applied to an endowment for specialized pro-

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gramming to serve Coyote Springs residents.

Each home that is built in Coyote Springs will have to follow strict guidelines developed by an architectural design and review committee on which Fox sits. "We have the final say on each homesite—we can reject any design," says Fox. "This isn't the traditional land transaction where we sold the land and looked away," he adds. "We are a partner who contributed to the improvement of the infrastructure of the land, to see that the neighborhood is in keeping with the historic property."

The museum and the developer hope to attract prospective buyers by offering them a unique relationship with the Museum of Northern Arizona. Among the many amenities available to future residents of Coyote Springs is unlimited free admission to the museum. In addition, marketing materials state that Coyote Springs residents are eligible for "full consultation and assistance in selecting and acquiring Southwestern art and crafts," "access to special archival files and images pertaining to regional history and architecture," and one-time annual

use of the Colton House. Will such benefits create more work for the museum's staff? Fox says he anticipates that any additional need will develop gradually and that projects such as research can currently be met by the MNA's library.

It is not just museum staff who may find themselves with growing responsibility. While Coyote Springs residents are promised many benefits, they are not expected to live passively. The museum hopes that they will participate in the museum community as volunteers, benefactors, and stewards. According to Fox, "The uniqueness of this project is that we want the owners to truly be active in the role of this museum."

In addition to this responsibility to the museum proper, a stewardship program is available through which Coyote Springs owners may work with forestry experts to either maintain the land surrounding their home or selectively clear trees. As part of another special program, future owners of three homesites will have the option of learning about archaeological sites discovered on their property during development of the area. Although the land has been fully

excavated by museum staff, owners of these lots will be able to investigate further or partially reconstruct the site with the museum's guidance.

How will the museum attract the sort of residents it hopes for? Barry Ebert of Sante Fe Management, the brokers working with Plateau Winds, says that the museum plans to first "advise the upper classes of the museum membership of the possibilities of Coyote Springs." Other steps include hosting a series of seminars on the Colton House as well as geology and forestry lessons to attract potential buyers.

The Coyote Springs residential development is only one part of Fox's ambitious vision of a multi-generational museum campus. In August, a charter high school will open on museum grounds. Located north of Coyote Springs, the school will serve about 110 students. Adding yet another dimension to campus life will be a senior living center that is scheduled to break ground this summer. According to Fox, the museum and its partners in this project (Northern Arizona Healthcare and Intergenerational Living and Health Care, Inc.) plan

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to launch an international effort to attract former scientists, cultural leaders, and artisans who want to stay active in their professions and who would like to participate in museum activities, such as mentoring charter school students.

To Fox, the key to the museum's current expansion and future survival is partnership. "The museum realized that it could no longer accomplish any goals independently," he says. "Everything we are doing involves partnering. But not in a way where we are just skimming the cream off the top. Each project is mutually beneficial, strengthening each partner."—*Susan Ciccotti*

Wrapped in Pride

When "Wrapped in Pride: Ghanaian Kente and African American Identity" opens in 1998, the public will be presented with a thorough background on kente—the woven cloth of rainbow-like stripes and patterns that has become so familiar outside of Africa and, in particular, within the African-American community. Organized by the UCLA Fowler Museum of Cultural History, Los Ange-

les, and The Newark Museum, N.J., the show will trace the history of kente in Ghana to its appearance in contemporary American society. Like other exhibitions of such depth, it is based on extensive study and planning. Curators and other museum staff, however, aren't responsible for all of the hard work. In an unusual collaboration, high school students in Los Angeles and Newark, N.J., are conducting research on the cloth's meaning and use for the contemporary portion of the exhibition.

Through interviews and documentary photography, 19 seniors from Crenshaw High School in Los Angeles are currently gathering information about kente's meaning in their local African-American community. In Newark, 13 11th-graders from the Chad Science Academy and 13 ninth-graders from University High School are doing the same. The research by each group of students will be used in the exhibition and accompanying catalogue to build upon the more historic sections, which will include a reconstruction of Ghanaian market stalls, a loom with a partially woven piece of kente, as well as numer-

ous examples of kente cloth.

Since the course began in autumn 1996, the Crenshaw group has interviewed such prominent figures as Los Angeles Police Chief Willie Williams; the founder of Kwanzaa, Maulana Karenga; and the Rev. Cecil L. Murray of the First African Methodist Episcopal Church. In Newark, students from both schools have interviewed people in the local Ghanaian community, and Chad Science has also met with members of the Newark Boys Choir, whose robes feature kente embellishments.

The idea for this unique partnership was conceived by the Fowler Museum's director, Doran H. Ross, who is a specialist on the arts of Ghana, and Betsy Quick, director of education at the museum and a textile and weaving expert. "I've been working with kente cloth for 23 years and for some time wanted to present an exhibition. More and more there is an emphasis on greater participation from the community in museums, and this seemed to be a good way," says Ross.

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most widely recognized of all African textiles. According to the Fowler, which possesses the largest collection of kente outside of Ghana, the fabric is produced and exported more than any other African cloth. While the production of narrow strips of woven cloth in Africa dates back to at least the 16th century, the type of kente that most people are familiar with today was first produced in the early 19th century. According to Ross, kente cloth is imbued with patterns that are intended to be read as symbols of human attributes. In pre-exhibition materials, he writes: "For example, one zigzag design called 'nkyinkyim' is usually used to identify a person with an unsteady or wandering mind." In Ghana today, says Ross, "you would wear kente to a wedding, a party, or an important state occasion, but not to work each day."

Beyond Ghana, the fabric has become a symbol of the pan-African movement, and to many people inside and outside the African-American community, it represents black identity and pride. The fabric's symbolism and subsequent ubiquity in contemporary African-American culture dates back to 1958 and 1960,

when the first president of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah, visited Washington, D.C., wearing the cloth. Citing other visible figures who have worn kente—such as Washington, D.C. Mayor Marion Barry and the former Tanzanian president, Julius Nyerere (whose country produces its own unique textiles)—Ross says, "The fact that you see kente deliberately worn is very telling. It has become *the* African textile." The colorful cloth and its distinctive designs now appear in everything from hats and jackets to beach balls and coffee mugs. While authentic kente is made solely in Ghana and some clothing is created there for sale to tourists, according to Ross, much of the clothing that is worn in the U.S. is made outside of Ghana with exported fabric. Also for sale in the U.S. are kente spin-offs made with fabric that has been printed rather than woven with kente designs.

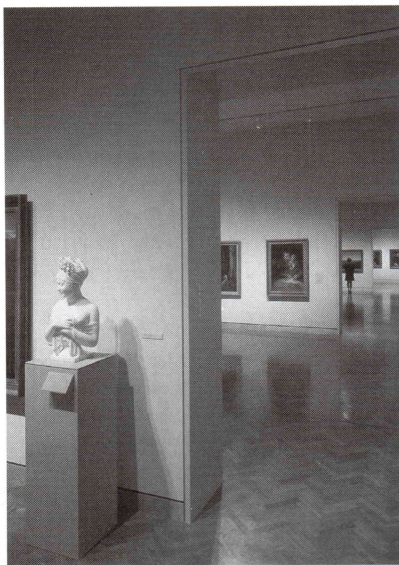
To explore the fabric's meaning in the African-American community, the Fowler and The Newark Museum devised a high school course with exhibition research as its focus and asked local high schools to help implement it. At

Crenshaw the curriculum took the form of a museum studies course, at Chad Science Academy it was melded into an African-American history class, and at University High the coursework became part of an art survey class. In each school, the courses have been more rigorous than many of the students expected. Says Crenshaw teacher Susan Curren, "Most kids and parents, when they hear art, think 'easy.' It couldn't be further from the truth."

Each of the courses are led by museum staff in conjunction with the class teacher. First the students learned methods for interviewing and photography based on the National Museum of American History's Cultural Reporter program, which guides students doing research on their communities. Then they began to arrange their interviews. Both Ross and Quick were impressed with Crenshaw's success in securing interviews with such high-profile figures as the Los Angeles police chief. Says Quick, "Public figures are anxious to talk with young people." At the Newark schools, because of the students' younger ages, museum staff and teachers had to

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take a more active role in setting up interviews and igniting the students' enthusiasm. "What made the difference," says Chad Science Academy teacher Gwen Samuels, "is that the museum made contact with local African-American churches, a couple of which the students or one of their family members attend—this brought the subject closer to home." Adds University High teacher G. Barrington Jackson, "Once they started recognizing the cloth they began stopping people that they would see in their apartment buildings or churches to interview them. That was the best learning process."

Throughout the school year, the students have used special events such as Kwanzaa and Black History Month as opportunities for interviews and photographs, as well as ways in which to express their creativity. In one particularly striking photograph, a Crenshaw student captured kente-design umbrellas opened during a rainy Martin Luther King Day. This photograph is among many images from which the museums will choose for the exhibition and catalogue. During Kwanzaa, the Chad Sci-

ence class planned a program in which African fashions, including kente, were worn. At the same time, the University High students held a preview exhibition of their photos and quotes.

In addition to conducting interviews with people who have a connection to kente, students at each school have been exposed to the operations of a museum as well as some unplanned, serendipitous experiences. At the Fowler, they met with staff in virtually every department to learn how a museum works and what it takes to put on an exhibition. Current overheard one student telling a friend who expressed envy at yet another visit to the museum, "This isn't a field trip—when we get there we really have to work." In a coincidence during one of the visits to The Newark Museum, the students bumped into photographer Chester Higgins, whose work they had come to see. Says Samuels, "They were thrilled to meet the man who had actually taken the photographs."

Conducting the courses has been a learning process for everyone involved. Explains Ethan Hall, assistant director for education for instructional pro-

grams at The Newark Museum: "We had to modify the curriculum to fit the needs of the students. Originally we planned to work with the social studies teacher at University High, but when the enrollment was too high—40 students—we shifted the program to the art survey teacher, who had only 16 students."

In an exciting finale, each student will purchase one kente object (with a budget of \$30 to \$50 provided by the museums) for inclusion in the exhibit. Accompanying each object will be the student's picture along with her statement about the meaning of her selection. "From the start," says Quick, "we knew that we wanted students as learners, as researchers, and that we wanted them to see what goes into an exhibition. And, in keeping with the interpretive nature of the exhibition, we want their own words, too."—S.C. **M**

Correction: The M Note about the exhibit "Facets and Reflections: Painting the Octagon's History" (March/April) stated incorrectly that a wooden model of the Octagon exists at the Library of Congress. Such a model was never constructed.



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Calendar



Monet and the Mediterranean

Fascinated by the effects of natural light on the world around him, Impressionist Claude Monet (1840-1926) was drawn to the sunny seascapes of southern France and Italy. First invited to the Italian Riviera by Renoir in 1883, he visited the area again and again. Between 1884 and 1908, Monet created a series of works—including several studies of olive trees in an Italian fishing village—that reveal his fondness for the region and his obsession

with “painting light.” This exhibition organized by the Kimbell Art Museum is the first to focus on the artist’s trips to the southern coasts of France and Italy. Almost half of the 71 works on display are from private collections, and many have not been exhibited since the artist’s death.

June 8-September 7, 1997:
Kimbell Art Museum,
Fort Worth, Tex.

*October 10, 1997-
January 4, 1998:*
Brooklyn Museum of Art

Two Hundred Years of English Naïve Art: 1700-1900

Long before the days of mass media marketing, English craftsmen created pictorial and sculptural works that addressed the practical and business needs of their customers. During the 18th and 19th centuries, for example, a painted sign often advertised a shop’s wares, a figurehead gave a ship an identity, and a portrait of a farm animal promoted a successful breeder. But not until the 20th century were the self-taught artists who

created these works accorded the same respect as their academically trained counterparts. This exhibition organized by Art Services International presents paintings, carved wooden figures, scrimshaw, and textiles produced by British folk artists between 1700 and 1900. Objects on display range from a draper’s sign carved in the form of a sheep to domestic items such as quilts and trays.

Through June 1, 1997:
Fresno Metropolitan Museum, Fresno, Calif.

June 21-August 17, 1997:
San Diego Museum of Art

*September 6-
November 30, 1997:*
Oklahoma City Art Museum

Images in Ivory: Precious Objects of the Gothic Age

This exhibition organized by the Detroit Institute of Arts presents approximately 100 examples of medieval ivory carving, and offers a view of private life during the Gothic period (13th-15th centuries). During that time, African elephant ivory was considered a luxury item in western Europe, and was used to decorate items ranging from personal objects to religious structures such as the cathedral of Notre-Dame in Paris. Items on display in “Images in Ivory: Precious Objects of the Gothic Age” include mirrors, combs, and boxes decorated with themes from romance literature, as well as statuettes and relief carvings displaying Biblical themes. The exhibition also tells the story of the eventual demise of this art form.

Through May 11, 1997:
Detroit Institute of Arts

June 15-August 31, 1997:
Walters Art Gallery,
Baltimore



The Spirit of Ancient Peru

The short-lived Inca Empire is famous for its gold treasures, but Peru's earlier cultures produced arts and crafts equal in beauty and skill. Despite the harsh, mountainous conditions in which they lived, early Peruvians had a highly spiritual and inventive culture. Nearly all of their artwork depicted the afterlife, and they believed that art aided one's transition from the natural world. This exhibit organized by the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco presents 175 items from the collection of the Museo Arqueológico Rafael Larco Herrera in Lima, Peru, the world's largest private collection of Peruvian pre-Hispanic art. The objects on display span more than two millennia and include decorated pottery, silver and gold body ornaments, textiles, and wood carvings.

May 17-
August 10, 1997:

M. H. de Young
Memorial Museum,
San Francisco

September 27, 1997-
January 4, 1998:
Knoxville Museum of
Art, Tenn.

Masterworks: Italian Design, 1960-1994

During the 1960s, Italian manufacturers began to employ architects as designers to give their mass-produced wares a distinctive appearance. These designers created an "Italian look," which received international attention and established Italy as a major force in Western design. Organized by the Denver Art Museum and circulated by the American Federation of Arts, this exhibition presents 145 objects representing furniture, glass, ceramics, metal, stonework, and lighting produced in Italy between 1960 and 1994. The exhibition is organized according to two Italian design philosophies that developed simultaneously during the

1960s: modernism and anti-modernism. Modernist designers often experimented with new technology and used industrial materials such as steel, glass, and aluminum to produce hard-edged geometric and biomorphic shapes. Anti-modernist designers usually created works by hand in small workshops; their designs are characterized by bright colors and patterns, and unorthodox combinations of materials.

Through September 21,
1997:

Opposite: Claude Monet, *Grand Canal, Venice* (1908).

Left: *Mosaic Earplugs with Profile of Warrior*, Moche Culture (c. A.D. 800). From "The Spirit of Ancient Peru."

Below: Alessandro Mendini, Studio Alchymia, *Kandissi Sofa* (1979). An example of the trend-setting "Italian look."

Bard Graduate Center
for Studies in the Dec-
orative Arts, New
York

October 17, 1997-
January 4, 1998:
Alyce de Roulet
Williamson Gallery,
Art Center College of
Design, Pasadena,
Calif.

January 25-April 5,
1998:
Tampa Museum of
Art, Tampa, Fla.

Jeff Wall

Canadian artist Jeff Wall has long been interested in the connections between photography and other visual media. Since the late 1970s, he has created large-scale transparencies mounted in light boxes, a technique influenced by cinema and advertising. Working much like a film director, he scouts locations, writes storyboards, hires actors,

and conceives of and arranges for costumes and special effects. The artist also draws inspiration from pre-20th-century tableaux paintings by Delacroix, Manet, Poussin, and others. Wall's carefully staged narratives represent his attempt to document contemporary life. This exhibition organized by the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, presents 30 of Wall's works, including *Picture for Women* (1979), a re-casting of Manet's *Bar at the Folies-Bergère* (1882).

Through May 11, 1997:
Hirshhorn Museum
and Sculpture Garden,
Smithsonian
Institution, Washing-
ton, D.C.

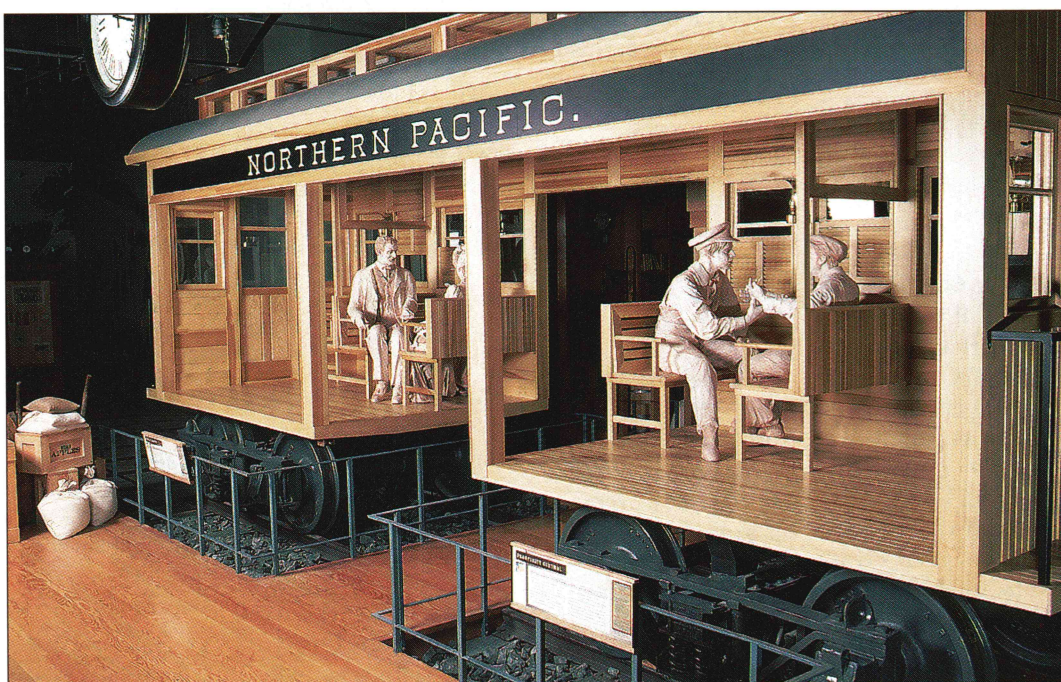
July 13-October 5, 1997:
Museum of
Contemporary Art,
Los Angeles **M**





“Thanks, Maltbie, for helping reinvent the history museum... creating the feeling of living history and a science museum in one space.”

David L. Nicandri, Executive Director, Washington State Historical Society, Tacoma, WA



*Photography © Washington State Historical Society/
Joel Polsky
Designs by Herb Rosenthal & Associates, West Office
Exhibition Design/Andy Kramer*

Washington State Historical Society made its own history in 1996, opening a new flagship museum next to historic Union Station in Tacoma's urban center. The graceful curves and arches of the Washington State History Museum complement and enhance its 1911 neighbor.

Inside, designers planned a museum that presents history in a lively and interactive manner, telling of the lives of the men and women whose labors helped build the state.

By recreating the Northern Pacific railroad car shown above and other full-size interactive sets, Maltbie Associates helped exhibit curators and designers reinvent and redefine the history museum.

Maltbie is pleased to have been lead fabricator for construction of the 23,000 square foot Hall of Washington History—meeting the Museum's essential craftsmanship requirement to produce the highest quality cabinetry

and woodwork. It was a challenging assignment involving managing an array of subcontractors. From artists to computer programmers—Native American artisans to A/V producers—Maltbie coordinated it all.

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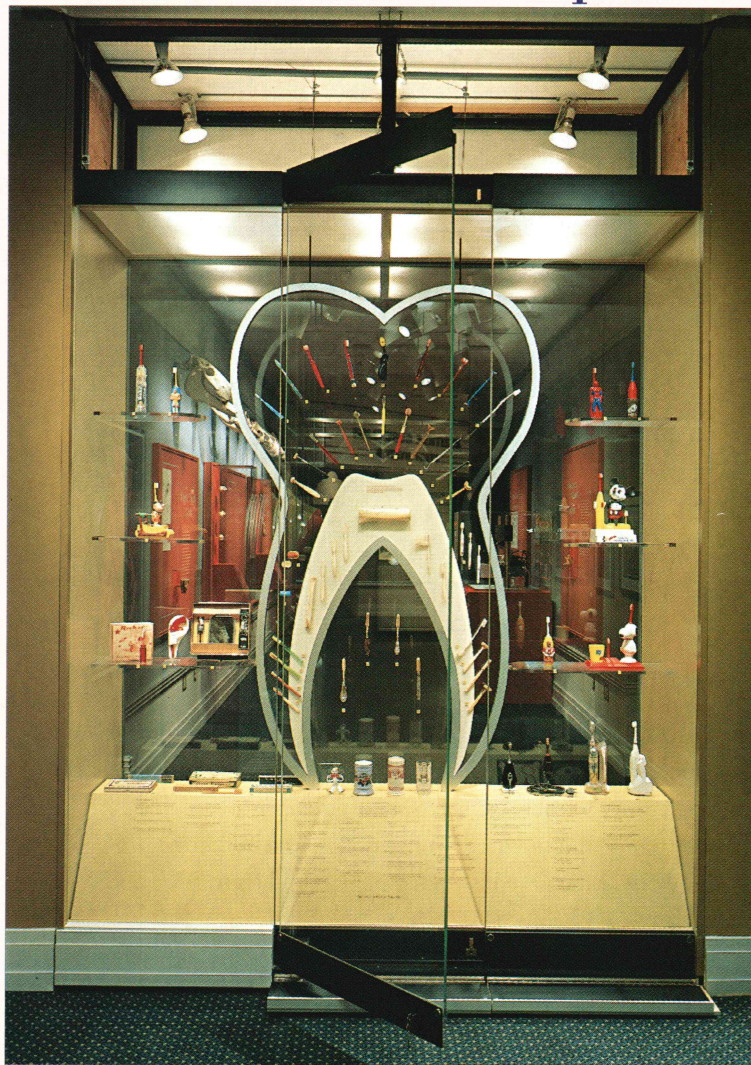


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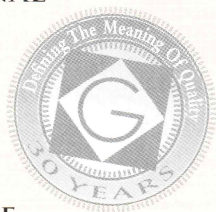
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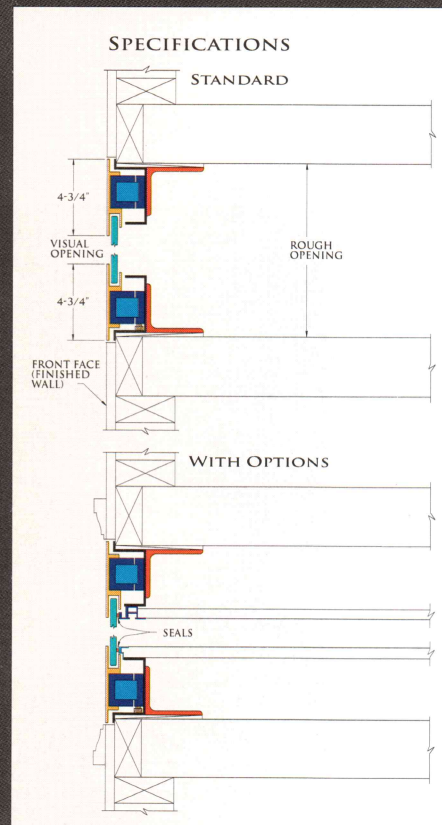
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Noteworthy



A bird's-eye view of Detroit's new Museum of African American History, the largest African-American museum in the country.

The **Museum of African American History**, Detroit, celebrated its grand reopening in April. The museum's new 120,000-square-foot building makes it the largest African-American museum in the country. The design by Detroit-based Sims-Varner Architects incorporates African motifs, including traditional masks placed over each entrance and textured bronze doors. The building's predominant feature is the dome over the central lobby, which is constructed of glass and aluminum and represents a traditional African hut.

The highlight of the museum is "Of the People: The African American Experience," a 16,000-square-foot permanent exhibition that examines the 400 years from the beginning of the transatlantic slave trade to the present day. Designed by Ralph Appelbaum and Associates, it includes components on the slave trade and slavery, Reconstruction, labor, the civil rights movement, art, and music. One of the exhibition's three orientation theaters was designed in the shape and size of a slave ship, and is constructed of wooden panels covered with the names of more than 2,500 vessels that participated in the slave trade. Inside, cast figures of 50 Detroit students ages 8 to 18 represent Africans who might have been in the ship's hold.

Other features include two galleries for temporary exhibitions, a 317-seat theater, a research library, gift shop, restaurant, and climate-controlled storage areas. There are also three "contemplation rooms"—reading areas where visitors can learn more about African-American history. The museum's \$38.4-million construction cost was funded in part by a \$20-million bond allocation, approved by Detroit voters in 1992.

In April, the **Newseum**, the first museum dedicated exclusively to journalism and journalists opened in Arlington, Va. Ralph Appelbaum and Associates designed the \$50-million, 72,000-square-foot museum, which has two permanent galleries. The Early News Gallery focuses on the history of news and communication before the introduction of the printing press in Europe, while the News History Gallery presents primarily American news history. The museum also has a 126-foot-long "News Wall," which displays daily front pages and televised news programs from every state. Other features include a 220-seat domed theater, a

state-of-the-art broadcast studio, and the News Byte Cafe, which functions as both a restaurant and a place to access on-line and Internet news services.

The Enid A. Haupt Conservatory at the **New York Botanical Garden** in the Bronx reopens to the public in May. Originally constructed by Lord & Burnham Co., a greenhouse firm, the 55,000-square-foot conservatory has required constant repair since it opened in 1902. Over the years, the levels of heat and moisture required by the plants, combined with weathering, eroded the structure. Architects Beyer Blinder Belle reconstructed the exterior,

removing lead-based paint, cleaning and repointing the stone walls, and replacing the wood windows with aluminum ones. Other features include improved climate-control systems and plant exhibits.

The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum, Cleveland, is relocating its Hall of Fame exhibit. The move to a tower in the west wing expands the exhibit from 1,450 to 5,482 square feet. The centerpiece of the new Hall of Fame will be a multimedia presentation, which includes performance footage of and interviews with inductees. Designed by Douglas|Gallagher Associates, Washington, D.C., the

Hall of Fame exhibit will sit on a 55-foot column that rises out of Lake Erie, and will be connected to the main building by an enclosed sky bridge. It opens to the public in June.

In March, the **Museum of Flight**, Seattle, opened a full-size air traffic control tower exhibit. The exhibit tells the story of air traffic control since the 1930s. The 30-foot tower was designed by Lidija Gregov of Gregov Architects, Seattle, while Promotion Products, Inc., handled the exhibit design. The Federal Aviation Administration provided equipment and technical assistance. Museum trustee William E. Boeing, Jr., donated most of the

\$1.5-million construction cost.

The **Greenbrook Nature Sanctuary**, a 180-acre preserve in Alpine, N.J., has opened its first museum. For years, the sanctuary's flora, fauna, and geologic exhibits had been housed in a dilapidated and leaking shed. Thanhauser & Esterson Architects P.C. designed a structure with two primary components. The first, a large stone wall, represents the nearby Palisades Cliffs and acts as a buffer between the sanctuary's parking lot and its bird meadow. The second component, the building itself, is made of wood and can be seen through openings in the stone wall. **M**

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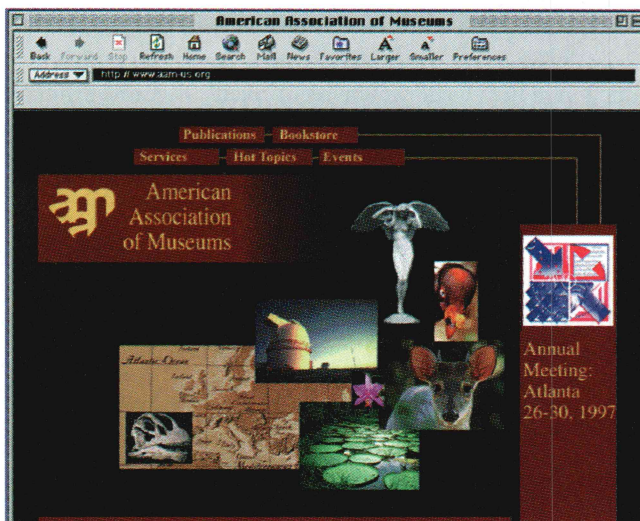
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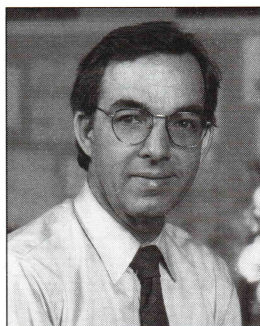
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People



Mark Leithauser to chief of design and architectural services, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

Betsy Bachmurski to administrative assistant, and **Anne Krulikowski** to volunteer coordinator, Rockwood Museum, Wilmington, Del.

Phillip M. Johnston to vice president of museums, Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, Boston.

Dolores Root to director, New England Science Center, Worcester, Mass.

Melissa Rachleff to manager of public programs, Brooklyn Museum of Art.

Annie Calloway Davis to vice president for development, and **Janet W. Solinger** to vice president of public programs, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

Thomas Rhodes to executive director, North Carolina Transportation Museum, Spencer.

Sarah Giffen Rooker to educator, Vermont Historical Society, Montpelier.

Theresa Harnisch to assistant director, **Adrian Cordova** to facilities/security manager, **Lynn Brittner Hutton** to registrar/collections manager, **Amanda Jones** to office assistant, and **Veronica Roybal** to museum shop manager, Georgia O'Keeffe Museum, Santa Fe.

Ellen L. Donovan to director, Anniston Museum of Natural History, Anniston, Ala.



Roslyn A. Walker to director, National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

Paul Kusserow to executive director, Craft and Folk Art Museum, Los Angeles.

Kimberly Rhodes to curator of education, Parrish Art Museum, Southampton, N.Y.

Marilyn L. Simon to assistant director, Queens Museum of Art, Queens, N.Y.

Ellen Diederich to director of corporate relations, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago.

Jacquelyn D. Serwer to chief curator, **Lynda Roscoe Hartigan** to deputy chief curator, **Thornton Staples** to chief of office of information technology, and **Jennifer Gaylin** to coordinator for the learning center, National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

Madeleine Grynstejn to curator of contemporary art, Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh.

W. James Burns to director of collections, Phoenix Museum of History.

Anthony Hirschel to director, Michael C. Carlos Museum, Emory University, Atlanta.



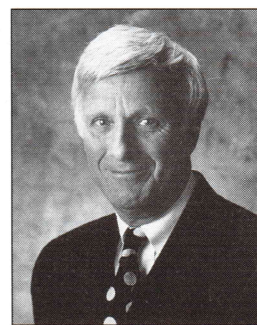
Sara Wieck to director of educational services, American Quarter Horse Heritage Center and Museum, Amarillo, Tex.

Robert L. McClendon to curator of exhibits, Museum of Mobile, Ala.

Beth Tuttle to director of marketing and communications, and **Nicole Arena** to public affairs officer, Newseum, Arlington, Va.

Jay A. Levenson to director of the international program, Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Susan E. Kowalczyk to collections manager/registrar, International Museum of Ceramic Art, Alfred University, Alfred, N.Y.



Ken Gross to director, Petersen Automotive Museum, Los Angeles.

Doug Winkler to director, Museum of Long Island Natural Sciences, SUNY Stony Brook, N.Y.

Dixie O. Boyle to museum educator, and **Michele Schmit** to museum assistant/bookkeeper, Adams Museum, Deadwood, S.Dak.

Daniel E. Stetson to executive director, Polk Museum of Art, Lakeland, Fla.

Marion Wilson to curator of education, and **Pamela McLaughlin** to tour and docent coordinator, Everson Museum, Syracuse, N.Y.

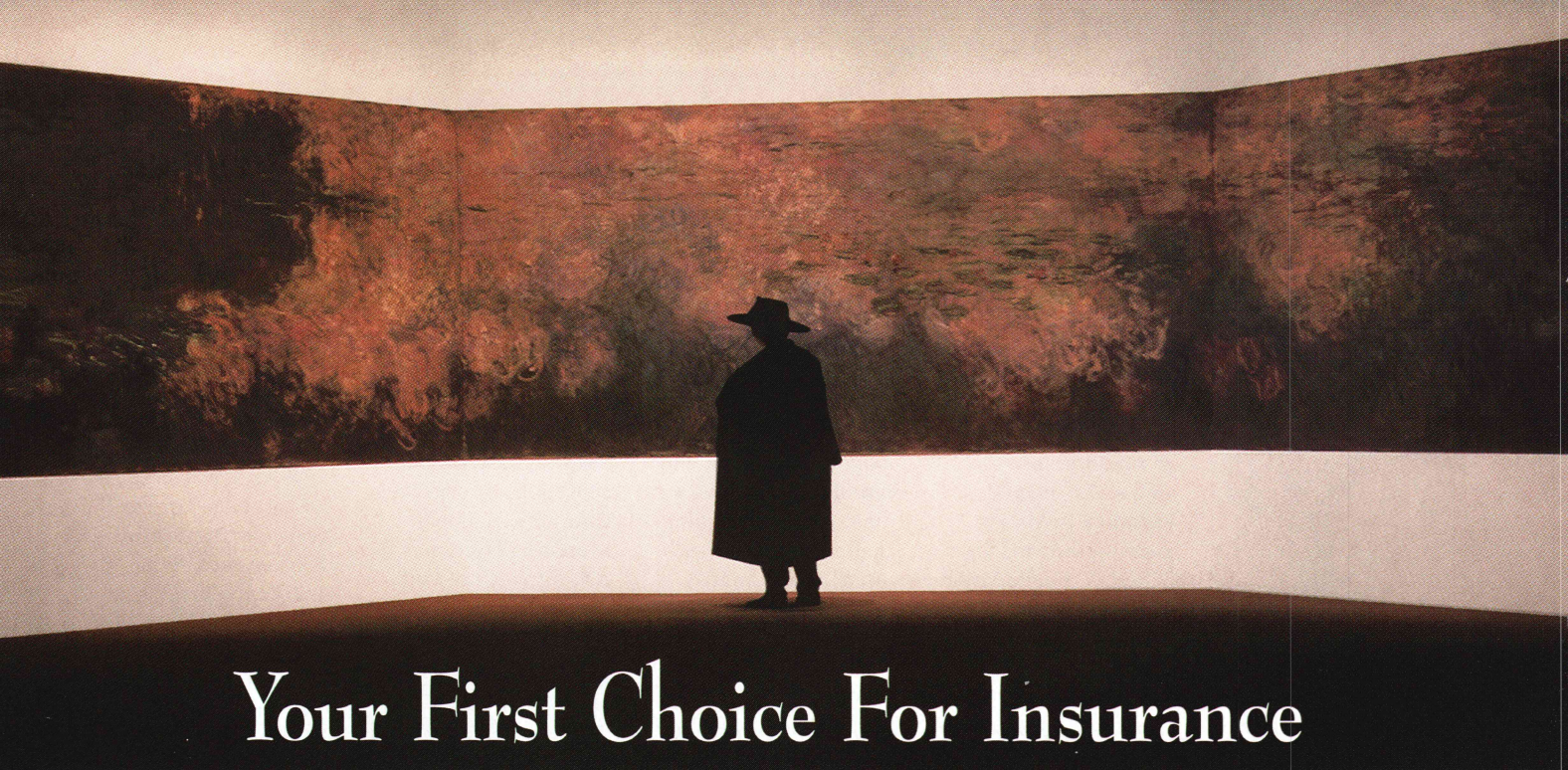
Obituaries

William Lillys, director of education at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art from 1980 to 1993, died of a stroke on Dec. 4, 1996. He was 72 years old. Previously, Lillys worked at the Witte Museum, San Antonio, Tex., and the Boston Fine Arts Museum. At his family's request, the William Lillys Memorial Fund has been established. Send contributions to: McNay Art Museum, Education Department, P.O. Box 6069, San Antonio, TX 78209.

On Feb. 7, 1997, **Alice Huei-Zu Yang**, the new Robert Lehman curator of collections and exhibitions at the Parrish Art Museum, Southampton, N.Y., was killed by a hit-and-run driver. She was 35 years old and had worked at the Parrish for only a week at the time of her death.

William McKinley Klein, Jr., president and CEO, National Tropical Botanical Garden (NTBG), Lawai, Hawaii, died of heart failure on Feb. 12, 1997. He was 63 years old and had worked at NTBG since 1994. Previously, he served as director of the Fairchild Tropical Garden, Miami, and the Morris Arboretum, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia. **M**

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The Bottom Line

BY DAN L. MONROE

Museums and Money: The Impact of Funding on Exhibitions, Scholarship, and Management. By Victoria D. Alexander. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996. 167 pp., cloth. \$24.95.

Knowledge of the ways that money is raised and spent in museums is a powerful tool for understanding their past and predicting their future. It is surprising, given that museums spend more than \$4 billion a year, that so little effort has been spent studying the economics of museums. Victoria D. Alexander helps fill this vacuum with her book *Museums and Money: The Impact of*

Dan L. Monroe is executive director and CEO, Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, Mass.

Funding on Exhibitions, Scholarship, and Management.

Alexander's book, in spite of its title, does not include all museums. It is a study of changes in funding, programs, and operations of art museums from 1960 to 1986. Though the 11 years between 1986 and the present have produced great changes in art museums, Alexander's book remains valuable, though it contains some weaknesses, especially for those familiar with the field. An organizational sociologist, the author is adept at collecting and analyzing data, much of it gleaned from annual reports. Unfortunately, she sometimes belabors the obvious. There is, for example, little new in the conclusion that funding influences exhibitions or that changes in funding have affected the

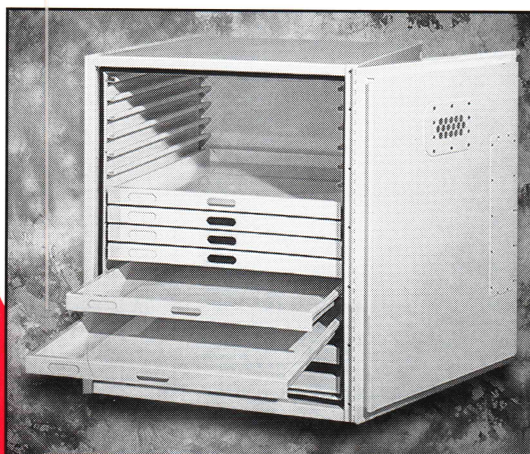
kinds of exhibitions art museums organize and present. The author also laces her work with nominally elucidated organizational theories in a thin attempt to explain institutional behavior. Nevertheless, her book does offer some interesting information and ideas.

Museums and Money substantiates some widely held beliefs about alterations in the programs and operations of art museums during the last quarter-century. The author argues that changes in financial support for art museums spawned a host of organizational and programmatic changes. The number of annual changing and traveling exhibitions, including "blockbuster" shows, nearly doubled during the study period. Three distinct phases can be identified during these 26 years. Between 1960 and

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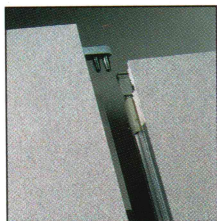
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American Indian, New York
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for History, South Bend IN
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US Senate Commission on Art,
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Ventura County Museum of
History and Art, Ventura CA

1966, art museums principally relied upon individual philanthropists for their support. Between 1968 and 1972, contributions from government and corporations increased. After 1972 and until 1986, increased government and corporate support produced tremendous changes in art museums. Although the period after 1986 is not part of Alexander's study, she notes that it might be characterized as a period of retrenchment and downsizing due to reductions in government and corporate support. Since understanding the last 11 years is most relevant to gaining a glimpse into the future for art museums, a similar study of the last decade would be of tremendous value. Alexander's book serves as a historical reference.

According to Alexander, as art museums gained access to greater amounts of money from more diverse sources, their attention shifted from scholarship, conservation, and acquisition to exhibitions and education. Attendance at art museums increased dramatically during the period of this study. Increased demands for accountability by new funding sources, combined with corporate sponsorship requirements for exhibitions with broad-based audience appeal, resulted in the growth of non-curatorial departments and functions within art museums. Development, public relations, accounting, merchandising, and related functions and departments grew dramatically. The author devotes considerable attention to the internal conflicts generated by the growth in business and education activities within art museums. She argues that curators lost power and influence to administrative, development, public relations, and education staff; directors became increasingly removed from curators as they strove to balance budgets and to satisfy external interests. The author sees no resolution to these conflicts.

While the analysis of numbers in *Museums and Money* is good, the analysis of internal changes and conflicts created by a changing financial base for art museums is less sound. The conflict between curatorial and other functions, while undoubtedly present, is far less compelling and intractable than Alexander sees it. During the last decade, external pressures caused by a shifting and declining government and corporate

support base have produced a much closer, less fractious integration of curatorial, education, public relations, and development functions. Curators have become more business-oriented; education, development, and public relations staff have become more knowledgeable about the values and ideas of art history.

The author also gives significant attention to structural changes in museum management, noting that several major art museums divided their business and curatorial functions between a president and a director. This model has not been widely adopted, in part because few museums are sufficiently large to support it and in part because increasing numbers of directors have both management and art history knowledge or training. A more detailed study of structural changes in art museums would be beneficial.

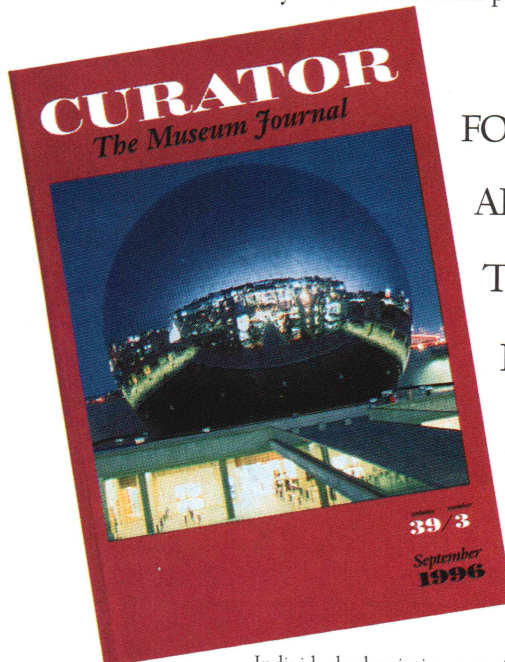
The impact of corporate support on exhibitions is carefully considered in *Museums and Money*. Alexander correctly points out that while corporations have very seldom exercised direct control over the content of specific exhibitions, they nonetheless influence the kind of exhibitions art museums organize and present. Exhibitions with broad-based audience appeal are likely to get corporate support; those lacking such appeal are seldom funded by corporations. Art museums have generally chosen to fund more specialized, scholarly exhibitions internally, or with supplemental government support, rather than cease to present such exhibitions altogether, as some had feared. Alexander also presents information, which I have not seen elsewhere, regarding the kinds of exhibitions presented by art museums and their sources of support. For example, she writes that within the universe of museums she studied there were no ethnic art exhibitions funded by foundations during the period of the study. Since 1986, however, several ethnic art exhibitions have received foundation support. Corporate support from 1960 to 1986 was weighted heavily towards exhibitions of historical and modern masters or thematic exhibitions, while government provided the greatest support for exhibitions of contemporary art. Few funding agencies showed interest in "local" art.

(Please turn to Books, page 65)

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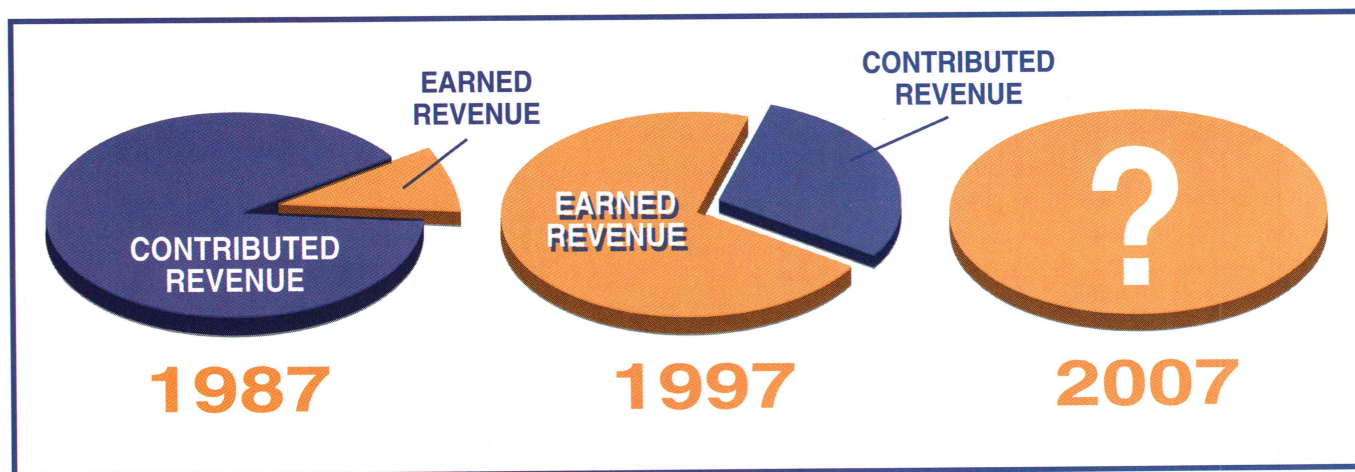
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Titanic: Delving Beneath the Surface

BY KEVIN J. FEWSTER AND JOHN R. VALLIANT

The March/April issue of *Museum News* included an article ("Titanic: An In-Depth Look") on an exhibition of objects raised from the wrecksite of RMS *Titanic*. The exhibition opened at the Memphis Convention Center in early April. Those who read the article might have wondered why the show is not scheduled for any American museum, or why the article carried no endorsement of the exhibition from anyone in the American or international museum or archaeological communities. Nor was there any mention of AAM's own well-known and widely disseminated ethical position on shipwreck salvage.

This *Titanic* exhibition, featuring some 300 of the more than 4,000 objects recovered over the past 11 years from the wrecksite by the American salvage company, RMS Titanic, Inc. (RMST), highlights major issues of concern to museums and archaeologists around the world: first, the trafficking of archaeological artifacts, and second, proper archaeological documentation and interpretation of significant material culture sites.

The *Titanic* rests in international waters off the Canadian coast. The wreck is outside the jurisdictional limits of any nation and, accordingly, the sort of cultural protection afforded terrestrial sites by most nations does not apply. Until recently, such deepwater sites were essentially beyond recovery, but modern technology brings even wrecks two-and-a-half miles below the surface like *Titanic* within our grasp. Sadly, international law advances much slower than technology.

Kevin J. Fewster is director, Australian National Maritime Museum, Sydney, and president, International Congress of Maritime Museums. John R. Valliant is executive director, Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum, St. Michaels, Md., and president, Council of American Maritime Museums.

Titanic is the world's best-known wrecksite. So whatever happens with this site will undoubtedly set a precedent for the future direction of cultural heritage management and recovery in deep water sites across the world's oceans.

For the best part of the last decade, the International Congress of Maritime Museums (ICMM) has been trying to establish practical guidelines and ethical standards to assist maritime museums with the recovery, acquisition, management, and display of archaeological objects recovered from the sea. ICMM was established 25 years ago as an affiliate of the International Council of Museums (ICOM) and currently has over 300 members in more than 50 nations. At its 1993 congress, ICMM members unanimously adopted standards relating to maritime archaeological practice modeled along lines similar to those adopted in 1987 by the Council of American Maritime Museums (CAMM).

Notwithstanding these standards, in 1994, Britain's National Maritime Museum at Greenwich (NMMG) staged a major exhibition of *Titanic* material raised by RMST. Smaller exhibitions of RMST's material had been shown at the national maritime museums in Paris, Stockholm, and Oslo in the years immediately before the 1993 standard was adopted.

ICMM's concerns with work on *Titanic* are principally that:

1. The recording and subsequent excavation of artifacts from the site should be done to proper archaeological standards and written up in a scholarly scientific archaeological report by a professional archaeologist.

2. The artifacts recovered should be retained as an intact assemblage available for public exhibition and research, and not be susceptible to sale to private individuals.

3. This collection should eventually be deposited in either a specially conceived

Titanic museum or with one of the major museums in Britain, the U.S., or Canada with close links to *Titanic*'s tragic story.


4. An international agreement is urgently required to ensure the long-term protection of the wrecksite.

RMS Titanic, Inc., is a for-profit company trading on the New York Stock Exchange. In spite of Chairman George Tulloch's assurances in last month's *Museum News* that his responsibility "is to preserve [the objects] until they can find a proper home," the ICMM fears that should his company change course, there is nothing to stop the collection from going under the auctioneer's hammer and, more than likely, being dispersed once and for all. Regretfully, it is all too easy to imagine circumstances that might trigger this: perhaps the Memphis exhibition loses money; or the next recovery expedition fails, as in 1996, when they dropped a large section of the hull, or the company loses its salvor-in-possession status.

ICMM's president raised these concerns with the chairman and director of NMMG back in 1994 when their exhibition was about to open. We were assured that no objects would be sold and a full archaeological report would be produced in the near future. However, by 1996, RMST was selling fragments of coal recovered from the wrecksite and no start had been made on hiring a professional archaeologist, assembling the archive of dive data, or writing the archaeological report.

Realizing that time was running short before the Memphis exhibition opens, the ICMM pressed both NMMG and RMST again and met in New York last December to impress on them anew the critical issues of cultural heritage management at stake. As ICMM president, I advised that if our concerns were not addressed the ICMM would do everything in its power to ensure that Tulloch's plan to take the Memphis show to

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"museums around the world" does not materialize.

In response to our concerns, NMMG agreed to fund a team from ICMM and an independent maritime archaeologist to visit Toulon, France (where much of the archive material is held), to evaluate if sufficient data exist to produce a quality report and, if so, how such a report might best be written.

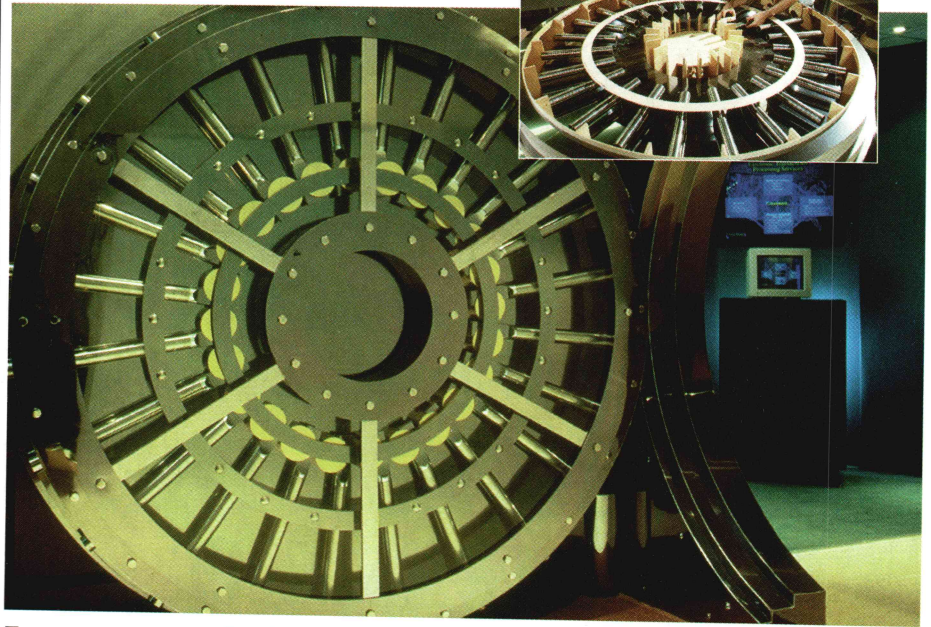
The team visited Toulon in early February 1997, and found that while no archaeologist was employed on site by RMST and no archaeological plan was developed as part of the dive and recovery program, there are sufficient data in quality and quantity (thanks largely to the personal efforts of the operational manager of the dive program) to produce a professional, scientific report. Regrettably, RMST has not yet agreed to adopt our recommendation by commissioning (and funding) the long-awaited archaeological report. They have not even committed themselves to unifying the mass of dive data currently scattered across at least eight cities on both sides of the Atlantic.

RMST has made 96 dives to the wrecksite. To assemble the archive and employ an archaeologist to write the report would cost them the equivalent of perhaps two dives. As one member of our Toulon team remarked, "If nothing is done to record and collate these data now, they might as well never have been collected in the first place."

Despite our continuing level of frustration with RMST, the ICMM is still actively encouraging key nations, including Great Britain, the U.S., France, and Canada, to develop long-term site protection for *Titanic* on an international scale.

Plainly, it is too late to stop the recovery of those *Titanic* artifacts already brought to the surface. Similarly, it would be shortsighted to brand all deep-dive recovery as "unclean" in the hope that by ignoring it we might somehow make it go away. The ICMM is striving to establish a practical, ethical framework for future partnerships among museums, archaeologists, and private enterprise. We believe this may be possible, but only if groups such as RMS *Titanic*, Inc., and all their partners stand by the noble principles they espouse but, judging from experience, do not yet necessarily practice. **M**

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Connecting with Visitor Panels

DARYL K. FISCHER

A new audience research strategy called "visitor panels" has staff at the Denver Art Museum talking: "I could not have gotten that understanding any other way. I could work here for 20 years and it would never occur to me." Curatorial Assistant Page Shaver is talking about a readily available opportunity for professional growth that changed how she communicates with visitors. Visitors are talking, too: "If school was like this, we all would have come out A students—if we'd been given that kind of opportunity to express ourselves, digress, then come up with resolutions or closure. . . ." says museum-goer Cecelia Underhill. She is describing a museum experience that asked her to explore and articulate her own thoughts about an exhibit.

When residents of Denver passed an \$8.5-million bond issue in 1988, the museum decided to focus its renovation efforts on the permanent collection. The project began with the installation of a new heating, ventilating, and air conditioning system and a centralized collections storage facility. Staff was restructured to create a collections management department and to build teams of curators and educators. The education department was organized around master teachers who were assigned long-term interpretive responsibilities for a curatorial collection. With physical improvements, staff changes, and a decade of visitor research in place, the Denver Art Museum was poised to develop new ways of communicating with visitors as it reinstalled its collections of Asian and New World art—a

project that was completed in 1993.

New interpretive techniques required new ways of measuring visitor satisfaction with the language, style, vocabulary, format, and placement of object labels, gallery signage, and orientation areas. Visitor panels are composed of eight to 10 adults representing the museum's target audiences. Paid a modest amount to come to the museum and critique interpretive materials in the reinstalled galleries, they provide valuable input that staff can translate into modest, but substantive, changes that improve interpretive devices. I interviewed 10 curators, educators, and panelists about their participation in visitor panels and their thoughts on the process.

What is a visitor panel?

Visitor panels differ from focus groups in several respects:

- Panelists are not asked to share their general reactions to the museum or the exhibits, but to offer concrete suggestions for improving specific interpretive components.
- Panelists are thought of and treated as experts who can help staff understand the public's experience of new exhibits. Called in repeatedly, like consultants, their extended participation has mutual benefits. Panelists' confidence and commitment grow as they become comfortable in the museum, and staff members' respect for panelists increases as they get to know them.
- Museum staff participate directly in leading and observing visitor panels. Panels are not led by a professional moderator with a marketing or social science background, but by a staff member with a basic knowledge of visitor studies and skills in leading group discussions. As a staff member, the moderator has clearly in mind the general goals of the museum and the specific objectives of the exhibit team.
- Exhibit team members sit at the back of

the room rather than on the other side of a one-way mirror. Their presence does not appear to distract or inhibit the panelists in any way. "I wouldn't have felt any more comfortable if they hadn't been there," said one panelist. "In fact, I was glad to know that so many people from the museum were interested, were listening."

- Visitor panels are conducted in any conference or general purpose room at the museum, enabling panelists to move back and forth from discussions to observations and assignments in the galleries. The museum setting is not only convenient but conducive to panelists' active participation.

The participants

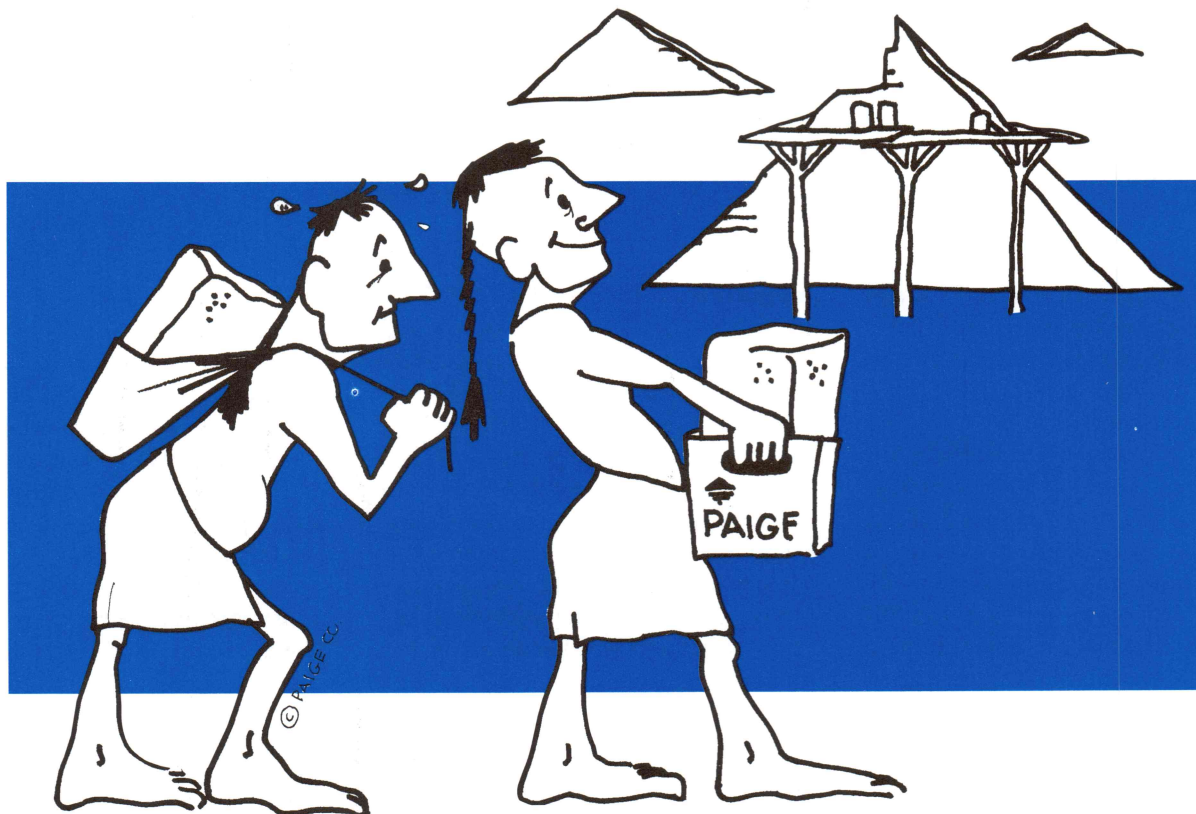
Effective visitor studies must keep two audiences in mind. One, of course, is the external audience—the visitors the museum aims to serve through its exhibits and programs. The reinstalled Asian and New World galleries were designed for the Denver Art Museum's two primary categories of visitors—novices and advanced amateurs. Visitor panelists were selected from both groups to serve as the suppliers of information.

The consumers of visitor panel data are the curators, educators, designers, and administrators that make decisions about exhibits. In order for audience research to have an impact, this internal audience must not only grasp but empathize with the messages coming from visitors. A personal connection can help staff relate to visitors, but this is lost in the translation of many visitor studies. Using "evaluspeak" to help museum staff understand visitor behavior is as difficult as using art historical terms to help a novice visitor appreciate a painting. In visitor panels, the visitor's voice speaks loud and clear.

The process

Visitor panelists are recruited by a tele-

Daryl K. Fischer is principal of Musynergy, a museum consulting firm based in Grand Haven, Mich. For more information on how to conduct visitor panels, contact: Patterson Williams, Dean of Education, Denver Art Museum, 100 W. 14th Ave. Pkwy., Denver, CO 80204.



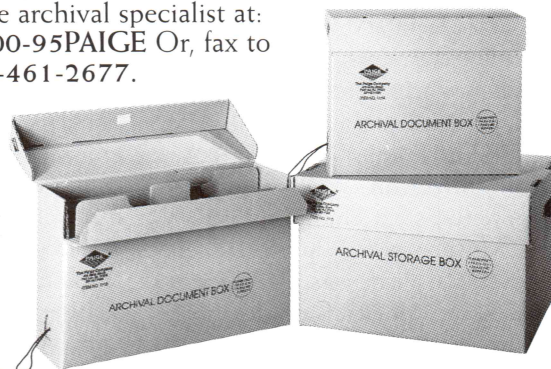
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marketer through a random phone screening process. Individuals who pass the screening interview and agree to serve are sent a letter with information about the first visitor panel. When they arrive at the museum, panelists are greeted by a staff member from the education department who sends them into the galleries to complete an assignment. After viewing a particular area of the exhibition and reading corresponding interpretive devices, they are asked to complete a questionnaire independently in preparation for the group discussion. Then they gather in the conference room to meet the moderator, who describes the museum's goals for the panel and mentions that interested staff members are sitting in to hear their comments. After introductions, the moderator leads panelists in an in-depth discussion of their reactions to the interpretive devices they have reviewed in the galleries.

The moderator uses a carefully planned discussion guide to solicit the specific information staff teams need to improve exhibits. This guide is developed by education staff with input from curators, exhibit designers, administrators, security and marketing staff, docents, and community members who are asked to submit questions based on their particular concerns about visitors' experience in the new galleries.

Staff assemble support materials such as assignments, label copy, and mockups of interpretive devices for visitor panelists to use during the discussion. These concrete references help them remember what they have seen in the galleries and respond specifically to the moderator's questions. Visitor panel discussions are recorded and transcribed so staff can refer back to particular comments made by panelists.

The moderator's role

The moderator plays a vital role in visitor panels, facilitating communication between visitors and staff. To hear both sides, the moderator must be objective and informed. This requires enough distance from the exhibition to have no investment in the panelists' comments and enough familiarity with the exhibition team's goals and concerns to lead the discussion. Each moderator meets with curators and educators on the exhibit team before the panel.

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phere that makes panelists feel comfortable and respected. To appear at once warm and neutral, she has to express less interest in the exhibit than in what each panelist had to say. Panelists appreciate the moderator's encouragement to speak frankly about things.

Staff interpretation of visitor panels

Denver Art Museum Director Lewis Sharp believes that curators, educators, designers, public relations, and development staff should all hear panelists' comments. "It takes a great deal of experience and maturity to take in all of that information, sort it, sift it, and come out with something constructive," he said.

Learning how to step back from visitors' comments and not take them personally is a skill that requires practice. Curatorial Assistant Page Shaver recalled the time a woman read a label she had spent weeks writing and said, "Who cares?" When Shaver recovered, she realized the panelist was not criticizing her personally, but suggesting that visitors were interested in completely different information. She was able to cut through the obvious and potentially hurtful con-

tent of the panelist's comment. Acquiring knowledge about visitors and discovering how best to apply it takes time, patience, and reflection. The "results" of audience research are not always immediately apparent, but are revealed as museum staff work on a variety of projects over the course of several years. Staff drew some of their most important discoveries from reflective practice and cumulative knowledge, combining previous audience research with visitor panelists' comments. Visitor panels produced both long- and short-term benefits. Ultimately, they changed staff attitudes about visitors' needs and interests in a fundamental way. "Since we started working on the reinstallation, I've come to the realization that this material is a lot more difficult and alien for visitors than I expected," said Inga Calvin, assistant curator of New World art. "Many people don't understand what Pre-Columbian material is doing in an art museum in the first place." That new knowledge will certainly impact future exhibits.

In the present exhibits, staff modified

some existing labels and orientation areas to help the reinstalled galleries function more effectively. More important, they applied what they learned from visitor panels in completing the reinstallations, which opened with approximately 20 percent of the interpretive materials in place in the Asian galleries and 60 percent in the New World galleries. Having set aside a portion of their budget and time to complete the projects after gathering input from visitors, staff were able to make important revisions in labels still to be written.

In the New World galleries, staff made changes that solved two interpretive problems. First, the "Transition Room" located between the two main areas of the galleries was intended to help visitors understand the connections between Pre-Columbian and Spanish Colonial art, but focus groups revealed that visitors often bypassed or misunderstood this key to understanding the collection. Second, the museum's entire collection of 4,000 Pre-Columbian objects was presented in open storage, a format that was unfamiliar to visitors.

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Visitor panelists weren't sure how to use the numbers in the cases to find more information in the booklets that identified objects by culture and period. To address both of these needs, staff created an orientation stanchion that visitors would encounter when they stepped off the elevator. Text, illustrations, and photos were incorporated in a prototype stanchion. Visitor panelists were called back to critique both the format and the label copy before the final orientation stanchion was produced, incorporating many of their suggestions.

Visitor panels can be useful at different stages of the exhibit development process. The opportunities staff have to implement their recommendations depends upon the timing. During the preliminary stages of concept development and object selection, visitor panels can serve as effective front-end evaluation techniques to help staff explore possible approaches to an exhibit based on visitors' previous knowledge or interest in the topic. Early in the exhibit development process, they can be used as formative evaluation, measuring the effectiveness of label prototypes and

wayfinding devices. The Denver Art Museum scheduled visitor panels later in the reinstallation process in order to give visitors a chance to "kick the tires." Staff learned how actual interpretive devices were functioning in the newly opened galleries.

Panelists' response

In serving the museum over an extended period, visitor panelists develop relationships with the institution and the staff, making their reactions to the museum as interesting to consider as the staff's responses to the panelists. The informality of the visitor panel format allows panelists to express themselves openly and honestly. One panelist mentioned how much she appreciated the way staff "projected themselves on my level. They accommodated my vocabulary. They said, 'Your opinion is important—don't hold back. Give it to us.'" This mutual respect and rapport helped visitor panelists feel safe making suggestions to staff—even in areas where they were not experts.

In addition to their modest payment, panelists receive intangible benefits like

friendships with other panelists. Perhaps the ultimate reward is seeing that their contribution has an impact on the museum. Several panelists returned to the museum to view the exhibits. "Every time I go there I look at the orientation stanchion. I like it very much and I feel like our input had a part in it. I could feel that our work was worth it," said panelist Joseph Avali.

Although the goal of visitor panels was not to build respect for museum staff or panelists, few programs accomplish this more effectively. The panels helped staff and visitors get to know one another, understanding different perspectives and breaking down stereotypes. When she talked to her church group about her experience at the museum, panelist Cecelia Underhill said: "When you think of people who have master's degrees and Ph.D.s, T.V. and movies portray negative images of those people. They look down their noses at you 'cause they're cultured and you're not. But I'll tell you, that's not even the truth. I know because I've had the opportunity to participate in some panels at the art museum. They're just like you and me." **M**

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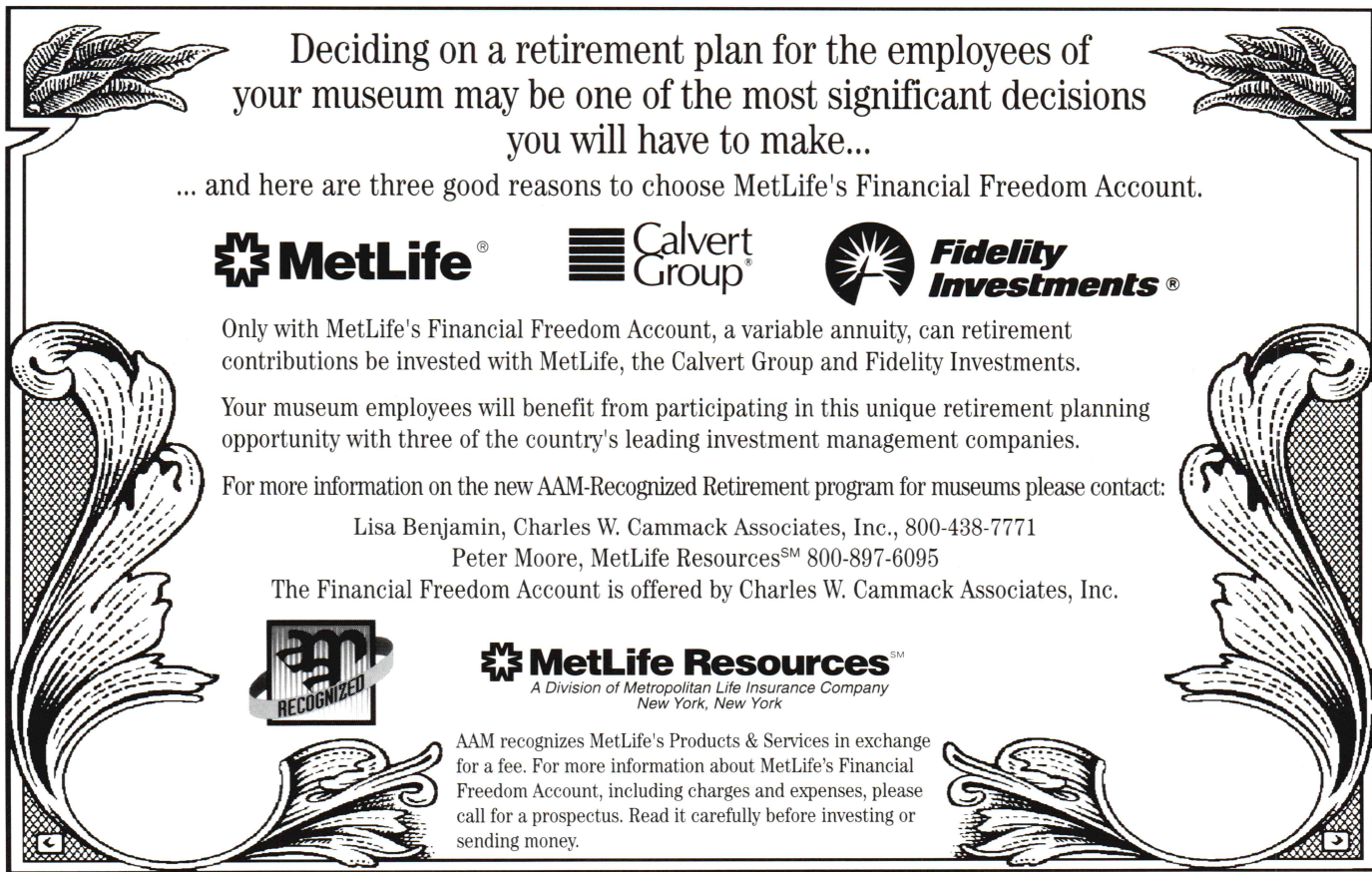
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Museums Building Partnerships

As museums simultaneously face shrinking public financial support and strive to play expanded roles in their communities, they are finding that they must devise new ways of doing business. For increasing numbers of museums, this means forming partnerships with other types of organizations in both the public and private sectors. AAM's 1997 Annual Meeting theme, "Competing in the Arena: Content, Creativity, and Cooperation," addresses the formation of such relationships.

Following are three recent success stories about museums that have formed partnerships. In Santa Ana, Calif., the Bowers Museum of Cultural Art joined forces with a local hospital and attracted an enormous audience—including many first-time visitors—to an exhibit of religious art. In Texas, the 11 organizations comprising the new Houston Museum District Association are working to encourage more visitation through cooperative programming and events promotion. And in Colorado, government agencies helped the Denver Museum of Natural History market the "Imperial Tombs of China" exhibit and negotiate the diplomatic issues that accompanied it.

We at *Museum News* hope that these stories—in effect, reports from the field—will inspire and educate other museums seeking to develop similar relationships in their communities.

Museum visitors pushed forward to kiss a docent's hand. Security guards gently explained that candles could not be lit in the galleries. People openly shared emotional personal stories, moving many within earshot to tears. Some guests knelt, reverent before the power of an image. On community festival days, thousands of visitors crowded in.

Bowers Museum of Cultural Art

By Brian Langston

These extraordinary events became part of everyday life in the fall and winter of 1995 at the Bowers Museum of Cultural Art in Santa Ana, Calif., during the 112-day run of the exhibition "Visions of Guadalupe: Selections from the Museum of the Basilica of the Virgin of Guadalupe." Through collaborative efforts with community members, government officials, church leaders, private corporations and—perhaps most extraordinary, a local hospital—the Bowers brought huge crowds through its doors. For many who came, it was their very first visit to a museum. And for the Bowers, it was the beginning of a fruitful partnership that continues to this day.

We should have known that this display of 79 paintings, engravings, statues, vestments, and votive objects from one of the world's most important religious shrines would be popular in our community. This was the largest show ever to tour from the Museum of

Brian Langston is director of marketing and public relations, Bowers Museum of Cultural Art, Santa Ana, Calif.



An anonymous work from "Visions of Guadalupe":
*The Virgin of Guadalupe with Four Apparitions,
Under the Patronage of Our Lady of Mercy and Saint
Anthony of Padua, from the colonial period (18th century).*

the Basilica in Mexico City, including many works that had never before left the country. More than 72 percent of the people in our town are of Hispanic heritage. The Virgin of Guadalupe is the patron saint of Mexico and of the Catholic Diocese of Orange County where Santa Ana is located. Her image is integral to the spiritual life of millions who believe that she first appeared in 1531 to a recent convert, Juan Diego, on a hillside outside Mexico City. Several miracles surround the sighting, such as her image appearing on Diego's cloak and the unseasonable blooming of roses. These events convinced the local bishop to build the Basilica of Guadalupe on the site. In the centuries that have followed, artworks have depicted the Virgin of Guadalupe glowing and floating above a multitude of scenery and characters—from religious figures to battle scenes to more intimate, domestic images.

In the summer of 1994, Bowers President Peter Keller got word through the museum-community grapevine that the Basilica Museum might be interested in touring a major show of the museum's collection of this art, which spans the past 400 years. He immediately began efforts to bring such an exhibit to our institution. One of the first calls he made was to Fernando Niebla, a member of our board of governors and a leader in the cultural and economic life of our region. Niebla's contacts in Mexico and the respect he has earned there made it possible for Bowers staff to meet Jorge Guadarrama, director of the Museum of the Basilica of Guadalupe, to gain an understanding of his plans for the exhibition, and to outline what we needed to initiate our own exhibition selection procedures.

The Bowers formed a special exhibition advisory committee comprised of elected officials (including Santa Ana Mayor Miguel Pulido), museum supporters, leaders of the local Hispanic community, and clergy. Among their many duties was ensuring that "Visions of Guadalupe" would be understood for what it was—an exhibition of religious art and a celebration of Hispanic tradition, not an endorsement of particular religious beliefs. The committee reviewed the show's curation and determined that while it was ecclesiastical in content, it approached the subject from a non-doctrinal, art historical perspective.

Above: *The Eternal Father Painting the Virgin*, from the colonial period (18th century).



The issue of "separation of church and museum," never really bothered the members of the committee or the general public. Maybe it seemed natural that the Bowers—which shows the art of indigenous peoples, almost all of which is "religious" to someone, somewhere—would present works viewed as sacred by so many. Also, we felt it inappropriate for us to limit the reasons why visitors enjoy art. Who are we to judge what sort of viewer experience is more authentic or important? People come to museums for diverse and often unfathomable reasons. Isn't it museums' ability to touch people's lives in different ways that makes us meaningful?

From the first hints that the Bowers Museum would be the only U.S. venue for an exhibition of Guadalupan art, excitement ran high in Santa Ana. The museum's board of governors and special exhibition committee, together with the development and public relations departments, took steps to galvanize enthusiasm through an array of

Of all the heartwarming
seeing whole families
in this strange place—a
with joy and wonder,

networking, fund-raising, outreach, and publicity efforts. We strengthened long-standing relationships with Hispanic groups, including service clubs, business confederations, neighborhood associations, political organizations, and even social circles. The museum's affiliate group, the Mexican American Arts Council, took the lead in building these relationships.

We also formed new alliances with private corporations. Rockwell, an aerospace firm, and nearby South Coast Plaza, an upscale shopping complex, funded the beautiful exhibition monograph, published as an edition of the magazine *Artes de Mexico*. Kraft Foods and Sanwa Bank sponsored free admission days. The *Los Angeles Times* donated advertising. Robinsons-May department stores purchased advertisements on our behalf and gave coupons to their customers. Dozens of other firms stepped forward to fund the production public service announcements, contribute to fund-raising events, and pay exhibition-related costs.

The museum formed the most comprehensive partnership, however, with Saint Joseph Health System, the lay organization that helps carry out the healing ministry of the Sisters of Saint Joseph of Orange, an order of Catholic nuns. The order oper-

ates one of the largest and most respected hospitals in our area, St. Joseph's, located a few blocks from the museum. Members of our exhibition committee suggested we approach St. Joseph's as a potential donor. Once the proper introductions were made, we presented our suggestions for their involvement. From the first meeting, it became clear that St. Joseph's was willing to exceed our highest expectations.

The health system did become one of the underwriters for the "Visions of Guadalupe" exhibition, providing substantial financial support. They must have reasoned that this exhibition would attract large numbers of people from the immediate area, many of whom would be potential patients for the health system. They were confident that the show's subject matter was in keeping with their image and mission. Also, they may have understood that this exhibition would be well publicized, so their financial investment was also a wise use of their public relations dollars. But even more important than these practical concerns was their often-stated belief that they were supporting the exhibition because it was *good for the community*. Their

how to act in this strange place—a museum. Seeing them again after they visited the galleries, faces glowing with joy and wonder, reminded me why we in the museum business do what we do.

The relationship that "Visions of Guadalupe" catalyzed continues with the Saint Joseph Health System. The hospital held one of its first "cultural diversity awareness" programs at the museum during the exhibition. These programs evolved from a belief that sensitivity to the cultural differences among patients is essential to proper health care. Now this program regularly relies on the museum as an important resource, asking participants to attend our seminars, films, and exhibition tours as part of their training.

Of course, we tried hard to spread the news of the exhibition through the media. We wanted not only to promote visitation but to give our exhibition sponsors recognition. So, in addition to the normal flurry of press releases and pitches to local newspapers, we made special efforts to translate all our messages for the many Spanish language news outlets in

experiences the exhibit generated, nothing was more powerful than piling off buses, some a little hesitant, perhaps not knowing just how to act museum. Seeing them again after they visited the galleries, faces glowing reminded me why we in the museum business do what we do.

extraordinary efforts on behalf of the exhibition demonstrated their sincerity.

The hospital urged its doctors and medical staff to visit the museum through individual invitations to special events, coupons in pay envelopes, and announcements in internal newsletters. Despite the museum's proximity to the hospital, attracting busy doctors and health care workers has always been problematic for us. So we particularly appreciated these efforts to introduce the museum to their staff. More than 50 St. Joseph's staff members chose to become members of the museum. Today, people in scrub suits and nurse's uniforms are not an uncommon sight in the galleries.

The Sisters of St. Joseph helped pave the way for cooperation with the Diocese of Orange County, which disseminated information about the show through their own network, and gave us labels so we could easily do mailings to each Catholic parish, school, care facility, and youth group in the region.

Finally, as the ultimate gesture of community outreach, the health system and the Sisters of Saint Joseph arranged for buses to travel between parishes on designated days to transport anyone free of charge to the museum to see the exhibition. Of all the heartwarming experiences the exhibit generated, nothing was more powerful than seeing whole families piling off those buses, some a little hesitant, perhaps not knowing just

Orange County, Los Angeles, and beyond. Public service announcements featuring actor Ricardo Montalban played on many T.V. and radio stations in Spanish and English. (I suggested projecting an image of the Virgin in the sky over the Santa Ana Freeway, but cooler heads quashed that one on the grounds of traffic safety.)

The show received unprecedented media exposure, all of it positive, much of it effusive. There were dozens of television interviews, including a sensitive, 11-minute segment aired on the Fox network's local morning show and a feature broadcast to Spanish-language media worldwide on the Televisa network. Even our toughest local art critic, who is known for wielding her encyclopedic knowledge like a scimitar, gave the exhibition a warm review, calling it "one of the most engaging and meaningful shows the Bowers has mounted in recent memory." (Only half-jokingly, museum staffers suggested that the review should be considered another miracle attributable to the Virgin.)

More than 60,000 people visited the museum during the exhibition. Credit for the success of the show goes to a remarkable group of volunteers, local elected officials, our own board of governors, and the exhibition's underwriting sponsors. These partnerships made it possible for us to get the show in the first place, to better interpret it for the people who came, and to fill the galleries with those visitors every day we were open.

What has half a million square feet of exhibition space, elephants and tigers, a giant brain, fossilized dinosaur bones, surrealist paintings, an outdoor sculpture garden, and more than 5 million annual visitors? In Texas, the answer is the new Houston Museum District.

Located midway between the city's downtown business district and the Texas Medical Center, the museum district's neighborhood has tree-lined boulevards, walking and bike

trails, a 440-acre city park, a variety of accommodations, and a selection of fine restaurants and funky coffeehouses. Public transportation routes run along the major streets that bisect the district. Except for the museums on the Mall in Washington, D.C., and in San Diego's Balboa Park, Hous-



Top: The brightly colored facade of The Children's Museum of Houston. Photo by Nash Baker.

Bottom: The Cy Twombly Gallery at The Menil Collection. Photo by Hickey-Robertson.

Houston Museum District Association

By Elisa Phelps

ton is the only American city with so many diverse museums in such close proximity to each other.

In January 1997, 11 organizations joined to form the Houston Museum District Association (HMDA). They are: The C. G. Jung Educational Center; The Children's Museum of Houston; Contemporary Arts Museum; Holocaust Museum Houston; Houston Museum of Natural Science; Houston Zoological Gardens; Lawndale Art and Performance Center; The Menil Collection; Museum of Health and Medical Science; The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; and the Rice University Art Gallery. The association's stated purpose is to develop the museum district as a cultural and education-

al attraction and tourist destination, through cooperative programming and events promotion. One specific goal is to encourage cross-visitation. Member museums hope to

Elisa Phelps is curator of anthropology, Houston Museum of Natural Science.

increase the total number of museum visits people make, rather than simply transfer visitors from one institution to another. Houston is a car-oriented city, and the HMDA also is working to increase pedestrian opportunities as a way of encouraging people to visit several museums at a time.

"Houstonians have wonderful opportunities to learn about our world through our art and cultural institutions," says Elyse Lanier, wife of Houston's mayor, Bob Lanier, and an active campaigner on behalf of the city. "By bringing them all together through the Houston Museum District we will be better able to serve our citizens."

One visible accomplishment of the HMDA is the city's installation of signs indicating the new cultural district. The large, easy-to-read, brown-and-white signs direct people into the area from all major access points, and provide clear directions to the individual museums. The new signs are tangible evidence that museums working together can secure services that normally would not be available to individual institutions.

Another successful project is the HMDA's eye-catching, four-color brochure, which includes an area map, opening hours, admission fees, and descriptions of each institution. The brochure was created in fall 1996, in anticipation of the "America's Smithsonian" traveling exhibition. The half a million visitors projected for the Smithsonian exhibit presented an excellent opportunity to introduce the museum district and encourage visitors to explore the cultural riches in their own backyard. Paul Winkler, executive director of The Menil Collection, guided the brochure through production. "[It] captures the rich variety of experiences offered in an extraordinarily beautiful area of Houston," he says.

The brochures are distributed through the

Greater Houston Convention and Visitor's Bureau, area hotels, the Texas Department of Transportation, the Texas Medical Center Visitors Center, member museums, and other area venues. By combining their stories and the available funding, the museums were able to increase the appeal and reach of the brochure. "Houston is an extremely decentralized city, and making people aware of cultural resources can be difficult," says Maryross Taylor, director of the Lawndale Art and Performance Center. "Lawndale has certainly received a boost from being a member of the museum district. For example, as a district member we participated in an event for area educators. We were able to reach people, who will be part of our ongoing audience, that we could not otherwise have reached, given our budget and the size of the city."

The museum district is administered by the South Main Center Association (SMCA), which was formed in 1976 to champion Houston's South Main area. Located south of the downtown business district, the area includes the museum district, the Texas Medical Center, Rice University, and the Astrodome Complex. "Houston is famous for the oil industry and the space industry; what we are known for in this area is the 'quality of life' industry," says Taylor. During the 1980s, museums gathered under the umbrella of the SMCA, primarily to address security issues. The loosely organized museum group began to look beyond the needs of the moment, and it grew into an entity that represented not just an alliance of purpose but a collaborative structure. Over the years, the idea of a museum district had been discussed and nurtured by business, community, and civic leaders, but it never took shape.

According to Maureen Moore, administrator of the C. G. Jung Educational Center,

"SMCA President Susan Young was really the catalyst." Young became the SMCA's president in 1994. For her, the museum district idea was "like finding a bird's nest on the ground." She saw the district as a unique treasure that needed to be nurtured and protected. During Young's tenure, the SMCA has served as both incubator and facilitator for the museum district. She suggests that, with two new museums—the Museum of Health and Medicine and the Holocaust Museum Houston—opening within the past year, others relocating to the area, and established institutions expanding, "The timing was right. The museums were ready to embrace the idea and cooperate with each other."

"The cooperative spirit of the member institutions is what really distinguishes the relationship," says Marti Mayo, director of the Contemporary Arts Museum. "There is a special atmosphere of cooperation in Houston. Those of us who live here take it for granted, but this sort of spirit does not exist elsewhere. It demonstrates to the public that we don't spend all of our resources competing with each other. Our programs are complementary and this in turn assures the public that their dollars are being well spent." Peter C. Marzio, director of The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, also stresses the cooperative aspects of the museum district. "By working together, the museums now have a much greater presence in the city," he says. Marzio emphasizes the importance of the museum district to the promotion and well-being of the local community. Recognizing that his institution is one of the oldest, largest, and wealthiest of the member museums, he says, "No matter how big and successful we become, we can't forget our community. The community is why we exist."

Young says that the SMCA board members recognized the educational and cultural value of the museum district and view the HMDA as benefiting the SMCA as well. She characterizes the SMCA efforts as "self-interested altruism." According to Taylor, "It was critical that the initiative came from the SMCA, an organization that could provide a larger framework. One advantage of working with an outside group is that it keeps all the museums participating equally." Truett Latimer, president of the Houston Museum of Natural Science, characterizes the relationship between the two organizations this way: "As a museum director, it seemed essential to me that we organize to promote the common interests of the group. As a former chairman of the board of the South Main Center Association, it was evident that the SMCA should take the lead in the establishment of the museum district since the museums form such a strong component of the entire area."

With the South Main Center Association as the parent organization, the HMDA was officially created as a separate non-profit corporation on Jan. 28, 1997. The separate corporation was created, in part, to provide an ongoing funding mecha-

nism. Membership fees are assessed on a pro-rata basis based on the museums' annual operating budgets, with upper and lower limits in place. The SMCA contracts for administrative services, which are supported by member dues. Additional funding for the brochure came from the SMCA, the Cultural Arts Council of Houston and Harris County, and a private foundation. The HMDA will seek similar funding partnerships for future projects.

The 12-member board of directors is composed of the CEOs of the participating institutions and the president of the SMCA. This is a hard-working board, which has quarterly annual meetings and active committees. Officers and committee chairs serve one-year terms. "Directors working together can be a powerful vehicle," says Barry Buxton, director of the Museum of Health and Medical Science. "The process creates a wonderful synergy that opens new dialogues about what can be accomplished." This year, efforts are focusing on developing the best distribution network for the brochure and determining the most effective means of reaching the tourist market. Changes to the brochure will include the addition of the association's newest member, the Rice University Art Gallery, as well as an insert with exhibit listings and an events calendar. The museums also are planning a summer program that will offer visitors free general admission to all member institutions and shuttle bus transportation.

Museums understand the connection between marketing their own institutions and maintaining the quality and success of their local neighborhoods. The appeal of the museum district has extended far beyond the member museums. The term is now being employed by realtors, civic groups, and a retail merchants association. The similarity of the various groups' names has caused some confusion in the local community, but it also reflects residents' embrace of the museum district.

Regarding the future of HMDA, Young says that maintaining the momentum is "like keeping up with a fitness program." She anticipates that the promotion and marketing of the museum district as a destination as well as an educational and cultural resource will become a way of life in Houston. Future projects include securing new freeway signs to encourage people to visit the area and exploring the possibility of a district visitors center. According to Tammie Kahn, director of the Children's Museum, Houston, "Houston will continue to grow at a significantly faster rate than the rest of the nation, with as much as 20 percent of our [new residents] coming from foreign countries. We should readily be able to identify and respond to the needs of this diverse community. Separately, the district museums represent a tremendous investment by generations of Houstonians who believed in the right of all people to have access to a better quality of life. Collectively, we can keep this promise to future generations."

Museums have a clear advantage when they work with government. As educational institutions viewed positively by the community, museums can help government further educational and cultural opportunities in a certain geographic region. When the Denver Museum of Natural History worked with local government agencies on the “Imperial Tombs of China” exhibition, we learned how to develop such a mutually beneficial relationship.

The traveling exhibit—featuring treasures from emperors’ tombs and palaces, which had never before left China—was organized by Wonders: The Memphis International Cultural Series.

Denver Museum of Natural History

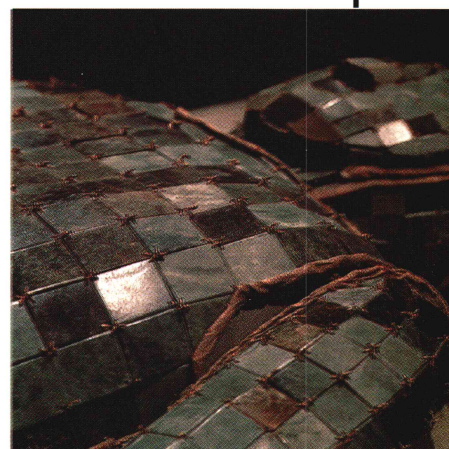
By Bill Gelfeld

The show was of blockbuster proportions. As the Denver Museum of Natural History contemplated hosting it, we had to consider the costs and logistics associated with such a large-scale project. State and local governments no longer routinely fund exhibitions of this nature, except with mitigating circumstances, so we understood we would shoulder the financial burdens. The museum, however, turned to the city of Denver for aid in marketing the exhibition and streamlining the process of mounting a blockbuster exhibit. Herein lay the roots of our successful partnership.

The Denver Museum of Natural History is fortunate to be a fiscally sound nonprofit organization. Two blockbusters previously hosted by the museum—“Ramses II: The Pharaoh and His Times” in 1987 and “AZTEC: The World of Moctezuma” in 1993—had each attracted more than 700,000 visitors, so senior staff believed this exhibition could be profitable.

At the time preceding the exhibition’s run from Nov. 2, 1996 to March 16, 1997, the museum’s president, Raylene Decatur, and director of marketing, Luella Chavez-Aragon, were both fairly new to Denver. This was an opportunity for them to develop new rela-

Bill Gelfeld is public relations manager, Denver Museum of Natural History.



Chimes traditionally rung when Emperor Qianlong was in residence at the palace during the 1780s (top), and Jade Suit (bottom) from the Han period (206 B.C.-A.D. 220), both on display in “Imperial Tombs of China.” Bottom photo by John Snyder.

tionships with local government in the spirit of working together to achieve a common goal. The museum developed a strategy for obtaining promotional aid from the city, taking an unusual approach that worked from the bottom up. Staff decided first to network with key individuals such as consultants and community leaders who were connected to the staff members we needed to contact within the city government. Rather than calling and setting up a meeting, Decatur and Chavez-Aragon attended events where they knew these key people would be. They established relationships with these individuals, then worked upward to the mayor's office, establishing other relationships along the way. All along, they articulated our interests and let the key people know how the city would benefit from the economic impact of this exhibition, especially through increased tourism.

The embassy and the governor's office helped determine in what order the dignitaries should stand and limousines should proceed.

Once we established a system of links to the proper offices, networking began in earnest. By the time museum staff reached the top of the chain of command, they had established a solid foundation and could ask the city to help market the exhibition. Once there was a unified understanding of the economic impact for Denver, the city agreed to do so.

The museum wanted permission from the city to hang banners in City Park, where the museum is located, and on the City and County Building in downtown Denver. There are prohibitions against hanging banners in the park, but museum officials met with the city planner and received his permission to proceed with the project. In addition, the agencies that grant permits for hanging such banners were among those with whom we had already networked, which made the process go very smoothly. The city agreed to let the museum hang banners in the park on city light poles and on the museum itself. The museum also received approval to hang a large banner on the City and County Building. This was unprecedented—no museum had ever hung a banner there before. Finally, the city allowed the museum to place promotional brochures in city buildings. The historic permission given to the museum to market the exhibition in these ways demonstrated that the bottom-up networking approach was successful.

In planning the opening ceremonies for the exhibit, the museum's public affairs manager, Joni Hamilton, also turned to the city—as well as state and international agencies—for assistance. The festivities were to include a parade and festival in City Park, and the museum had invited the mayor of Den-

ver, the governor of Colorado, and the ambassador to the United States from the People's Republic of China. With entourages expected from Washington, D.C., Chicago, and Beijing, the public affairs manager worked closely with the Chinese embassy in Washington and the consulate general's office in Chicago, planning itineraries and scheduling meetings, and events. She also worked with the governor's international trade office on protocol issues and with the mayor's and governor's offices on scheduling their participation.

The challenge for Hamilton was not only to ensure that the museum received positive media coverage, but to recognize and balance the needs of each official. Her concerns included ensuring that proper protocol was followed for each member of the group. The Chinese embassy explained the priority and significance of each of the three entourages of Chinese digni-

taries, as well as the treatment they customarily receive. The governor's international trade office helped Hamilton understand where the governor and the mayor fit in hierarchically with the ambassador, who is considered the top-ranking official for the Chinese government in the U.S. From a practical perspective, the embassy and the governor's office helped

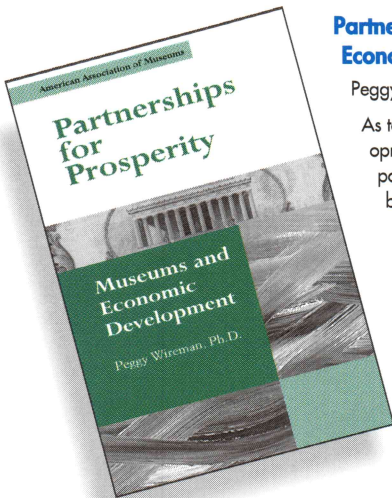
determine in what order the dignitaries should stand and limousines should proceed.

In developing the exhibit, we also relied upon collaborative efforts with other, non-governmental sectors of the community. The museum's goals in hosting the "Imperial Tombs" exhibition were to provide an excellent educational program, to set a new standard for customer service, to enhance the image of the museum, to increase the museum audience, and to achieve financial success. In our efforts to maximize our chances of meeting these goals, we sought support from the private sector and developed programming we thought would be popular among visitors.

To help pay for the up-front costs of the exhibition and provide in-kind services, the museum sought sponsors from within the community. They received promotional opportunities in association with the exhibition and used the exhibition in their own advertising. The museum established strong promotional partnerships with a record number of corporations, using the community to leverage money and word of mouth for the exhibition. One of the most successful promotions took place with a Chinese restaurant in Denver, which offered patrons a special dinner called the "Emperor's Feast." Patrons entered a contest to win a life-size replica of a terra cotta warrior, one of the artifacts in the exhibition, and could purchase half-price tickets to the exhibition. The promotion ran the entire length of the exhibition and helped drive ticket sales. Another

(Please turn to "Denver Museum," page 67)

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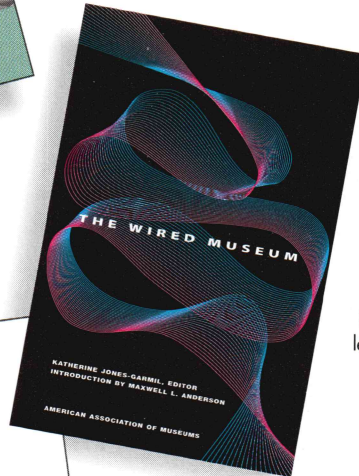


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Peggy Wireman, paper 144pp. 1997

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Katherine Jones-Garnil, editor
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Once a hush-hush, behind-the-scenes activity, the preservation and restoration of cultural heritage is increasingly the focus of museum exhibitions, seminars, and outreach worldwide

By Joyce Hill Stoner

In the early 20th century, art was restored quietly in the back rooms of museums. Restorers guarded trade secrets. George Stout, pioneer conservator and former director of both the Worcester and Isabella Stewart Gardiner Museums, noted that in the 1930s, "it was naughty to inquire about the condition of a work of art, almost as naughty as to inquire about the digestive system of an opera singer." Sixty years later, major museums across the globe have put on major exhibitions featuring the innermost secrets of artworks, their health and condition. Twelve-thousand visitors to "Preserving the Past" at the J. Paul Getty Museum in 1991 witnessed gap filling; inpainting; mechanical cleaning of stone, bronze, and ceramic antiquities; earthquake testing of mounts; scanning electron photographs of ancient gold jewelry; and forgery detection tech-

Joyce Hill Stoner is director of the Winterthur/University of Delaware graduate program in art conservation.

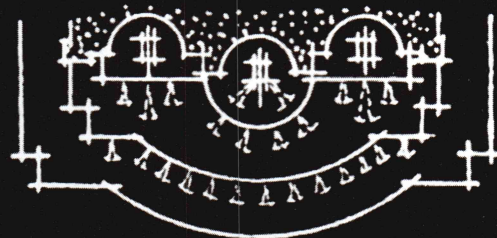


John Singleton Copley's *Portrait of Benjamin Hallowell* (c. 1765-68) before (left) and after (right) conservation treatment. From the exhibition "Altered States," which received the 1996 Keck Award for increasing public awareness of the conservation profession.

niques. In 1995, the Metropolitan Museum in New York placed x-radiographs and neutron activation autoradiographs of revered paintings on display in "Rembrandt/Not Rembrandt." The exhibit, created entirely from the museum's own holdings, attracted 401,673 visitors. And in May 1996, the Walters Art Gallery in Baltimore opened an exhibit with recreations of its paintings, objects, and manuscripts conservation laboratories, complete with interactive displays.

Why this increased focus on conservation? Some curators have decided that witnessing in-progress conservation treatments is of significant interest to the public and changes people's perception of the museum from a storehouse to a living, breathing entity. This was proven by pioneer public-view treatments in Detroit and Baltimore. Frescoes by Diego Rivera at the Detroit Institute of Art were treated in-situ in their galleries while the public watched from August to September in 1987; due to excellent press and public response, Rembrandt Peale's *The Court of Death*, was treated behind Plexiglas in 1994-95. At the Walters Art Gallery, a 16-foot Tiepolo painting was cleaned, consolidated, and inpainted behind Plexiglas windows from September 1993 to April 1996. The public response to this event was so enthusiastic that the Walters

(Please turn to "Conservation," page 59)



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Modern Art: Making People Mad

By Danielle Rice

There exists today a tension between the interests of the general viewing public and those of the professional world of artists, scholars, collectors and critics who define and legitimize the work of the museum. Outcries against positions taken by scholars and museum experts generally take the form of highly publicized controversies around certain exhibitions. These controversies reveal that the public's voice is culturally "conservative"—that is, characterized by a set of assumptions that most scholars now consider old-fashioned and untenable. Most specifically, the public seems to question the museum's very right to question.

Most scholars and art experts do not think that museums have a corner on defining truth, beauty, and art in absolute terms. The post-modern decentering of knowledge has resulted in an awareness among artists, scholars, and museum professionals that knowledge is largely a function of interpretation or narrative discourse. But the public does not seem to want or expect from its museums the admission of multiple or oppositional voices and the nonhierarchical interpretive strategies that underscore scholarly disagreement, ambiguity, or ambivalence of meaning. And these are

Danielle Rice is curator of education, Philadelphia Museum of Art. This article is adapted from a speech given at the Directors' Forum sponsored by the American Federation of the Arts at The Newark Museum, November 1996.

exactly what the "experts" think is important.

Museum curators and other scholars who work with them are intellectuals who have absorbed the values of their peers. They have a mandate to be provocative, innovative, and leaders in their respective fields. For museum curators, the exhibition is the primary vehicle for cutting-edge scholarship, often leading to a lengthy publication or catalogue. Although exhibitions are also developed to attract and inform visitors, the audience's needs and interests don't usually drive the planning process. Thus it is not surprising that a scholarly bias can create exhibitions that are difficult for the visiting public to understand. And if one depends on the words to say what the objects cannot, one cannot always be sure that the words will get read.

Furthermore, the new thinking, while it affects the script of an exhibition, rarely affects its physical presentation—the way that objects are displayed. The format of exhibitions is fairly inflexible since the language of display is developed specifically to work within the museum context and tends to be linear, progressive, and authoritative in its presentation. Curators seldom sign their labels, so their words can easily take on the anonymous voice of authority embodied in the institution of the museum itself. Also, while most scholars are relativists with regard to value systems informing knowledge, they become fundamentalists as soon as the issue of quality is raised. In the museum setting, only the "very best" objects can be displayed—almost always defined in absolute terms.

Where difficult contemporary art is at issue, the public voice relies on that Romantic assumption that art is a universal language understood by all. Thus, many museum visitors reject difficult or challenging art on the basis that it is incomprehensible. But unlike a lot of the other art in the museum that they may not really understand, modern art continues to make people really mad. Why is that? Of all the art forms in a large, encyclopedic institution like the Philadelphia Museum of Art, modern art is most obviously dependent on the museum context as a "framing" device. A circle of stones or a canvas with a blob of paint on it would be very hard to recognize as art outside the museum's walls. But within the museum setting this strange-looking stuff has to be art because it is being presented as such. Contemporary art is a clear reflection of institutional value systems, or expert decisions about what constitutes good art. As a result, it forces visitors to confront the difference between their personal definition of art and the institutional definition.

This conflict in turn challenges an assumption that most visitors hold dear—that museums define art in absolute terms. When people discover that something the museum has chosen to display does not match their own internalized assumptions about the nature of art, they feel that they have been cheated. Furthermore, they instinctively rebel against what they perceive as the "authority" of the institution. In other words, people do not like to be reminded of their "outsider" status. Paradoxically, a mistrust of experts causes many people to reject expert opinion just at the moment they need it most. On the other hand, in settings dealing with contemporary art, experts seldom address this lay audience directly, preferring to assume that their audience is composed of art world insiders who don't need their explanations.

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order to define themselves and to have their values affirmed and shaped. They are not prepared to be challenged to question and to think. The Romantic theory that the arts relate more to the emotions than to the intellect and therefore constitute a universal language equally accessible to all is still communicated broadly, if at times inadvertently, by the educational system. Thus, museum visitors often assume that they will be able to understand anything in the art museum readily, and without much previous know-how, and they feel frustrated when their actual experience fails to meet that expectation. Moreover, if art is a universal language, then how can it even be said to have a body of experts?

Contemporary artists and scholars believe that, to be worthwhile, art and ideas must be challenging, difficult, and innovative. This consensus limits art's ability to respond favorably to popular tastes. As Dutch curator Jan Vaessen pointed out at the conference on "Art Museums and the Price of Success" (Amsterdam 1992), the basic modernist assumption that art is good for people is rooted in art's freedom of operation,



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which fosters freedom of vision and engenders innovation. Paradoxically, art affirms its freedom by asserting its esoteric nature. Art museums celebrate art's freedom by designating as museum-quality only those forms of art validated by the art world. Museums can hardly escape the inherent contradiction governing their actions: they must make art accessible to all, but they must neither be too popular nor show art that is too readily pleasing to many people.

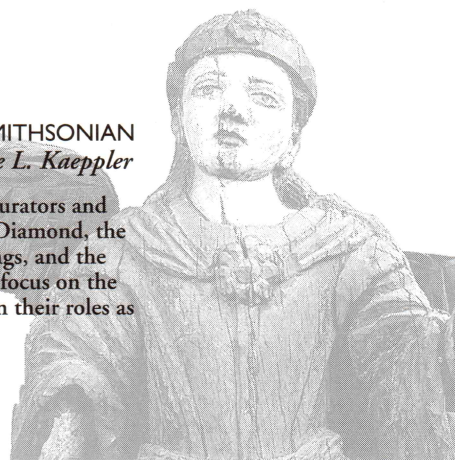
Artists, museum professionals, and other scholars are often much more aware of—and self-conscious about—such contradictions and questions than average museum-goers. If we choose to present these questions to the public, we are still doing so from an authoritative stance implying that people should be thinking about these things. Thus museums, which scholars and artists have for many years labeled as conservative, are often more culturally liberal than most of their visitors. A liberal attitude may shape a more relativistic approach to ideas and objects, but it does not necessarily translate into greater inclusivity. In fact, quite the opposite is true.

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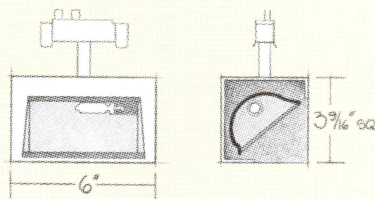
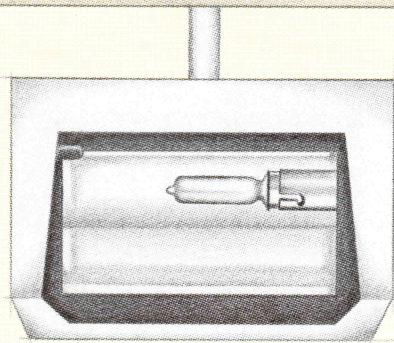
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While museum professionals everywhere struggle with the need to appeal to ever-increasing audiences, those very visitors are finding the experts patronizing, elitist, and opposed to maintaining cultural traditions and values. Wendy Steiner, an English professor at the University of Pennsylvania, notes in the September/October 1996 issue of *Museum News* that "[t]he erosion of popular trust toward those most knowledgeable about art is a major cause of the current crisis in American culture. Both the people and the government should recognize that a country in which the respect among artist, public, and expert has broken down is not one in which culture—or democratic freedoms—can flourish."

In her book, *The Scandal of Pleasure*, Steiner points out that while relativism may appear to be more inclusive it is completely incompatible with fundamentalist thought and as threatening to conservative, fundamentalist thought as fundamentalism is to relativism. She believes that while a fundamentalist may deny a relativist's freedom of thought, a relativist denies a fundamentalist the possibility of action. The two positions are mutually exclusive but co-exist nonetheless, along with many variations in between.

So how are museum professionals to continue making informed judgments and rational decisions in the midst of this complexity? I have three suggestions:

- **Be political:** For many years art was considered pure—unfettered by political and social pressures. We now know better, but we still act as if museums were similarly neutral, unaffected by the complex compromises and decisions that, in fact, keep them funded and alive. Let's begin by acknowledging our political nature. Museums represent reality, but they also participate actively in community life. As representers of reality, museums need to openly acknowledge their cultural liberalism and relativism, positions guided by expert opinion. As community participants, museums need to be mindful of the fundamentalist positions of some or all of their constituencies and to establish appropriate channels of communication with them. Institutions also need to realize that expert opinion may need

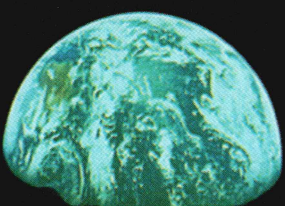

to be challenged occasionally in favor of more inclusive compromises. Inclusion may occasionally necessitate questioning the big "Q" word—quality—acknowledging that it is a construct defined by a cultural elite with a particular set of values.


A political approach acknowledges that museums in the United States are microcosms of society at large. They are divided along class lines, with the governing bodies drawn largely from the owning class, the curatorial and management personnel from the middle class, and the maintenance and security force from the working class. We stand to gain a lot by creating vertical and horizontal lines of communication within our own institutions. The opinions, attitudes, and biases of the very people we want to include may already be well represented inside our walls. If we can figure out how to engage the dissenters within our midst in an active and thoughtful debate about the nature of authority, we might learn how to extend that discussion to our visitors.

•**Lighten up!:** The weight of an educational mission and the responsibility of preserving and caring for collections often make museum professionals forget that most people come to the museum for recreation, for pleasure. In their meetings and journals, museum professionals fret that if they pander too much to visitor tastes, their institutions will sell out, becoming like Disney World. This fear is patently absurd. Visitors know the difference between a theme park and a museum, just as they know the difference between a cheeseburger and a filet mignon; like most of us in this culture, they happily consume both. In terms of defining their missions more around visitor service, perhaps museums should become more like Disney. But Disney's menu is very limited, offering visitors only a restricted brand of pleasure through consumerism. Museums offer a variety of pleasures through enlightenment, awareness, contact with real objects (so desirable in today's culture of simulation), enriched contact with oneself and others, and association with glamour.

In the past we've defined these differences as those between entertainment and education. But these definitions are misleading because people love to be

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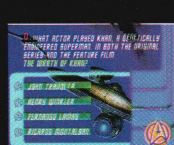
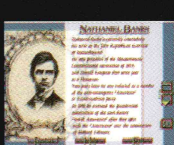




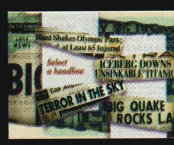




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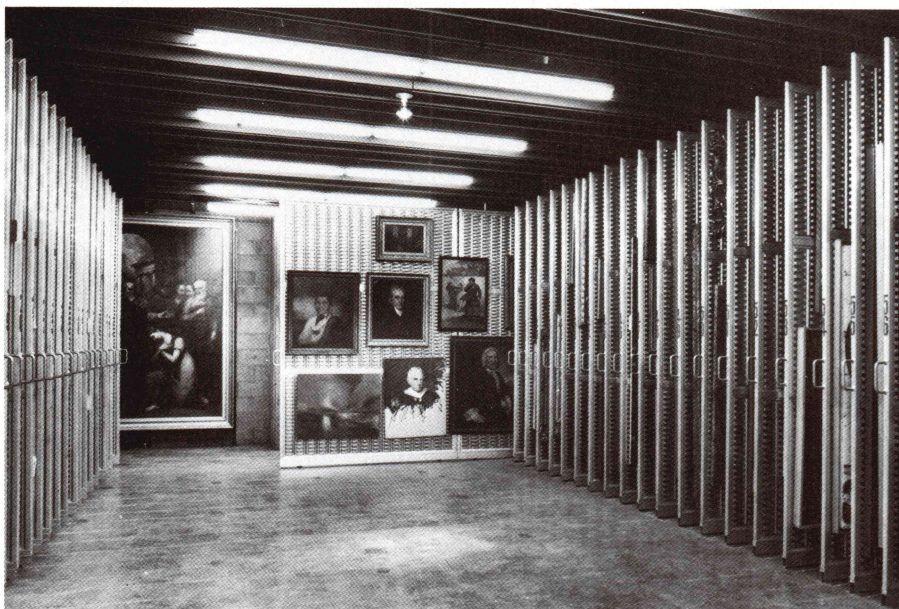
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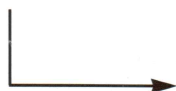


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entertained with learning. A more useful distinction might be between a passive utilitarian model of pleasure (which Disney World achieves primarily through sensory stimulation and the opportunity to purchase souvenirs) and an expressivist model of pleasure (which museums achieve through self-growth and social contact).

•**Try anything once:** There are as many clever solutions to the problems of seducing and educating the public as there are museum professionals and artists. Recognizing the tensions between museums and their publics is the first step toward resolving them. We can, even while celebrating our role as experts, take pride in wanting to provide what Art Institute of Chicago Director James Wood has termed an "elite experience for everyone." With unfettered optimism and a spirit of adventure, we can engage actively in the current debates about authority and power that have so affected museums' and artists' abilities to function as free agents. **M**

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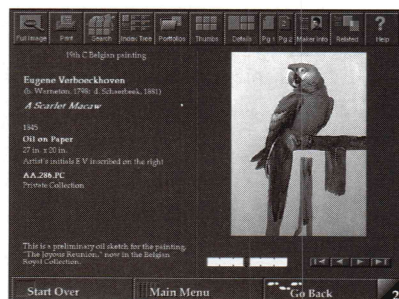
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staff mounted a second exhibition documenting the treatment, accompanied by another show dedicated to activities in the conservation laboratories. Walters Director Gary Vikan told his staff, "I want to create for the visitor the sense of wonder that people feel when they enter the conservation lab." The Walters exhibit, in fact, required visitors to go through doors labeled "conservation."

Wendy Watson, curator of the Mount Holyoke College Art Museum, has always had an interest in the sciences. She believes conservation is "a 'way in' for people to learn about art by understanding something about technique and conservation." In 1994, her museum and the Williamstown Art Conservation Center, toured "Altered States," a sophisticated exhibition detailing treatments of paintings, drawings, objects, sculpture, and furniture to three venues in Massachusetts and New York over seven months. According to the guards, visitors stood for record-breaking periods reading explanatory text. Well-attended public symposia were

held in New York City and Massachusetts, and the Mount Holyoke bookstore continues to receive orders for the exhibition catalogue. A Smith College art historian wrote of the catalogue, "My students and I will use it every year—a 'must' read," and a local journalist said the exhibition's "illustrated, didactic wall labels . . . [and] its sensitive arrangement of objects really will stimulate our little gray cells." The "Altered States" catalogue and exhibition also exemplify interchange among art historians, scientists, and conservators—the "tri-ologue" conservators hope for when designing and carrying out treatments.

Another major reason conservation exhibitions have flourished in the 1990s is the increased attention to the key role of preventive conservation. Conservators now realize that they must establish a partnership with the public in order to prevent damage to works of art. Every older conservator has probably had an epiphany of sorts illustrating the need for public education. After working weeks, months, or years on the meticulous cleaning of a large outdoor fountain or wall-sized contemporary painting, the conservator may find that all the labor

was in vain in the wake of new vandalism. Members of the public, however, are less inclined to cause damage when conservators speak to them or even bring them behind the scenes to observe conservation work. Similarly, poor storage conditions, high light levels, earthquakes, or fires may suddenly nullify careful consolidation or flawless retouching. Again, when the public and museum personnel learn how controlled light and humidity and careful handling and storage can minimize damage, more planning is likely to occur. Collaborative work among conservators, architects, exhibition designers, mount makers, and fire companies can make a difference in such situations. We are also eager to explode the concept of art as an elite-only interest. Conservators join museum educators in emphasizing that our artistic heritage belongs to everyone.

Treatments in public view have now proven their worth as a public draw and continue to proliferate all over the country. Conservators are demonstrating their techniques, discoveries, and philosophies to anyone who will pause to look and listen, from school groups to museum trustees. In April 1995, visitors

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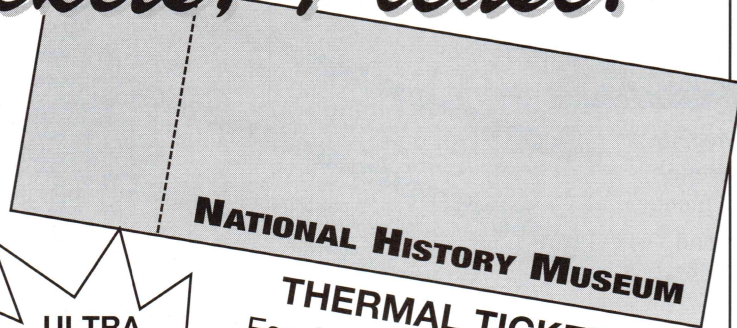
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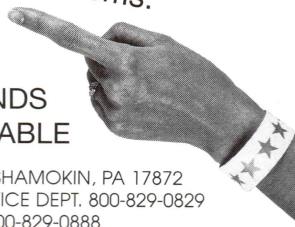


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observed the treatment of dioramas at the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History. Other recent projects—often with extensive local press coverage—have included work on the 1905-07 John White Alexander mural cycle at the Carnegie Museum of Art in Pittsburgh, and large paintings at the West Bend Art Museum in Wisconsin. Some of these fishbowl treatments have provided extensive explanatory signage and visitor comment books. Museum-goers have commented enthusiastically; a Walters visitor wrote, “Why don’t you do this all the time?” Despite some attendant interruption and inconvenience, many conservators say that they would be pleased to continue this practice.

Exhibitions involving conservation concerns, once rare and located only in small back galleries, have become fully mainstream during this decade. In 1990, the National Gallery of Art in Washington mounted an exhibition focused on the conservation, examination, and interpretation of Bellini and Titian’s *The Feast of the Gods*. In 1992, the Getty Museum displayed the documentation of a six-year effort by the Getty Conservation Institute and the Egyptian Antiquities Organization to conserve the wall paintings of Nefertari’s tomb in the Valley of the Queens. The California Afro-American Museum (CAAM), in collaboration with Getty conservators, presented an exhibition from March 1993 to January 1994 on preventive conservation and preservation concepts and methods used on CAAM’s collections.

Members of the public have become involved in the activities required to treat large monuments and outdoor sculpture. In 1989, Save Outdoor Sculpture! (SOS!) was established under the joint sponsorship of the National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, and the National Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Property (NIC). More than 200 organizations and thousands of volunteers from Girl Scouts to retired veterans have joined to help in 106 SOS! projects nationwide. Survey teams in all 50 states have been organized and have contributed more than 28,000 survey forms describing the condition of prized local monuments. Civic organizations have contributed goods and services, and local journalists have provided extensive magazine and newspaper coverage of these preserva-

tion efforts. TimeWarner, Inc., provided 4,000 copies of videotapes for educational kits.

West Lake Conservators, a private firm of paintings conservators, organized the small town of Skaneateles, N.Y., to save over 300 paintings by local artist John D. Barrow that had been severely damaged by poor storage conditions. Following the conservators' extensive public education efforts, local civic clubs such as the Rotary, Masons, and Lions sponsored treatments with Father's Day pancake breakfasts and calendars, and organized a "Borrow a Barrow" project to underwrite treatment of works in return for their subsequent display. Twenty sixth-grade students dressed in 19th-century costume knocked on doors, set up a display, and held an exhibition of treated paintings that was covered by Syracuse television. The project began in the 1980s and is continuing successfully.

The professional conservation organizations—the American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (AIC), the National Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Property (NIC), and the International Institute for Conservation (IIC)—have embraced public education and outreach for all the above-mentioned reasons. In addition, public awareness of the importance of conservation activities helps stimulate funding from federal and private sources. A video produced by the Council of Library Resources and the American Film Foundation, *Slow Fires*, addresses the deterioration of books on acid paper. It created measurable increases in congressional support for the use of acid-free paper and library preservation efforts. The AIC adopted public awareness as one of its five top priorities in its 1995 strategic plan; sponsors public lectures, media information, and networking activities among professional and public groups; and has published information packets, a poster, and educational brochures: "Caring for Your Treasures: Books to Help You," "Matting and Framing Works of Art on Paper," "Conservation Training in the United States," and "Guidelines for Selecting a Conservator." The theme of the 1996 NIC meeting was "Building a Constituency for Collections Care: Children, Youth and Families." Four years earlier, the NIC had published *Caring for*

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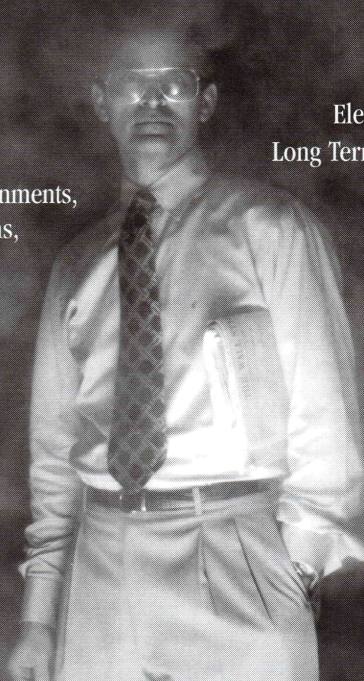
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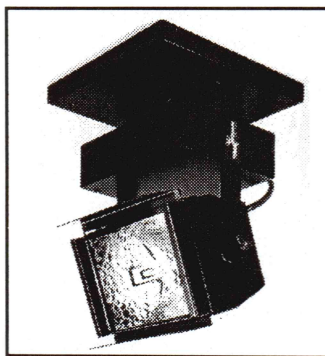
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The IIC presented its first biennial IIC Keck Award in 1994—"for the individual or group who has most increased public awareness of the conservation profession." (Caroline Keck, pioneer U.S. conservation educator, now 88 years old, continues to call for more public education.) The 1996 winners were Mount Holyoke's "Altered States" exhibition and "Media Save Art '91" by the Italian guru of preventive conservation, Gaël de Guichen, which consisted of five international competitions.

Through similar but smaller initiatives, museums, libraries, and conservators have also presented conservation "fairs," teacher training programs, clinics, lectures, seminars, brochures, newsletters, and information on the Internet. Last April, the Library of Congress held its first "Preservation Awareness Workshop." Almost 600 collectors attended lectures, gathered handouts, and visited science-fair-like displays to learn about proper care and storage for quilts, family Bibles, photographs, comic books, videotapes, and computer discs. Conservators demonstrated mending paper, sewing books, gold tooling, and testing materials for toxicity. Washington journalists described learning about such "bombshells" as the damage caused by magnetic albums, yellow note stickers, and paper clips.

The Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) has invested time in outreach toward schools. LACMA is producing monthly seminars for K-12 teachers from the Los Angeles area. Once a month, from October to May, 300-800 teachers attend an evening of lectures, tours, and programs linking science and art and involving conservation scientists and conservators of textiles, paintings, paper, and objects. The LACMA staff believes this is particularly important because the arts are no longer part of the public school core curriculum, and many teachers have no art background. The teachers pay only \$10 for each of these "Evenings for Educators," which also include a reception, videos, and live music. They are given packets with addresses of conservation organizations, before-and-after slides of conservation treatments, and handouts on suggested

classroom activities such as mixing egg tempera, making Japanese paper, or working with NIC's Save Outdoor Sculpture! project. Many teachers are "repeat visitors" and earn points or college credit for their attendance. Other conservators have begun regular lectures in the schools; some have brought "degradation kits" to third- or fourth-grade classes to show how iron and bamboo deteriorate or how dyes and textiles fade.

Local seminars, lectures, tours, and diagnostic clinics for artworks are multiplying. For example, the Western Center for the Conservation of Fine Arts (WCCFA) in Denver held a seminar last summer called "Who Cares," which was attended by appraisers, collectors, dealers, and individuals from small museums and historic homes. Participants learned about care of paintings, works of art on paper, frames, wedding dresses, rugs, and other artifacts.

On-line, the public can learn more about conservation via World Wide Web sites such as the NIC home page (<http://www.nic.org>), the ICCROM home page (<http://www.icomos.org/iccrom/>), and the Preservation Directorate, Library of Congress (<http://lcweb.loc.gov/preserv>)—also reachable through the library's Gopher LC MARVEL or via fax (202/707-3434). The Krannert Art Museum in Illinois has created an Internet conservation display about conservation procedures and x-radiography called "Science in the Art Museum" (<http://www.art.uiuc.edu/kam/Explorer/ATAM>). During the

January 1996 floods, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) posted information on salvaging water-damaged textiles, photographs, and other family heirlooms on its Web site. Since 1987, Walter Henry of the Stanford University Libraries has coordinated a comprehensive on-line conservation exchange called Conservation Distlist, which has led discussions among 2,000 conservators, curators, and others professionally involved in the conservation of museum, library, and archive materials from 25 different countries. Topics range from book repair to pest control, and often involve heated exchanges among opinionated practitioners. (Those wishing to subscribe should e-mail consdist-request@lindy.stanford.edu.) Conservation Distlist is part of Conservation OnLine (CoOL), which provides basic information ranging from conservation ethics to training programs on its Web site (<http://palimpsest.stanford.edu>).

Clearly, the work of conservators has assumed a new public dimension. The Getty Conservation Institute is planning an international media conference for 1998 to be called "Conservation Goes Public." Conservation has even found a place in the most public of media—motion pictures. Holly Hunter, Goldie Hawn, and Sigourney Weaver played paintings conservators in *Home for the Holidays*, *Deceived*, and *Ghostbusters II*. Their work would have been helpful after Jack Nicholson, playing "The Joker," defaced paintings in *Batman*. **M**

Letters

continued from page 7

venues must offer similarly compelling stories in order to have equity in today's cultural market.

In my practice, I am constantly amazed at the difficulty that many museum professionals find in embracing design principles that have proven effective in engaging the interest of millions in the commercial marketplace. The "virtual experiences" to which Able refers are often the most effective tool for providing context or a sense of immersion in an exhibit. Like theme parks, public museum facilities are delivery systems for experiences.

I agree with Able's notion that in

order to compete successfully on the cultural landscape, museums must capitalize on their uniqueness, their identity. Secure in this, museum professionals should not feel their identity threatened by the application of some of the most effective tools available for inspiring ideas, emotions, and memories.

The broad cultural marketplace offers a vast, untapped patronage for museums. I am convinced that, given the right creative tools, the museum profession will find awesome returns on their equity.

Michael F. Konzen

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Correction: The name of the photographer of Peter Waddell's painting in the March/April M Notes section (p. 9) was misspelled. He is Robert C. Lautman.

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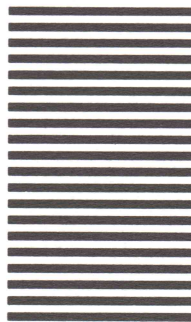
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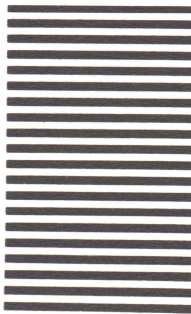
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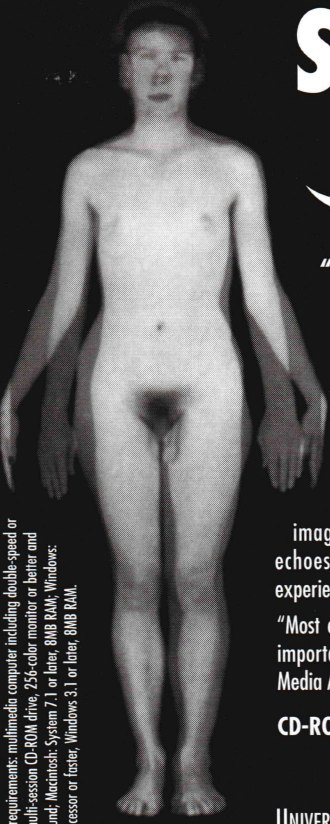
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Another concern addressed by the book is the fear, articulated within museum circles throughout the 1980s, that increased corporate support would undermine the traditional integrity of art museums and infect them with commercialism. It is hard to argue that this fear has not come to pass. Corporate logos and names are routinely given high visibility in promotional materials. Corporate and other events are routinely held in museum facilities. Large banners with large corporate logos commonly grace the exterior of major art museums. Museum gift shops are found in suburban malls. Corporate support became increasingly tied to corporate marketing objectives rather than to charitable goals. The decline in corporate support forced art museums to become much more entrepreneurial in their facilities rental, retail, and other income-generating activities. Today, art museums are indisputably more commercial—and populist—than they used to be. Like most changes, there are positive and negative outcomes. It seems clear, though, that mid-size and large art museums now play a more central role in their communities than they did in the past.

Alexander posits that new financial pressures and changes in the political climate have led art museums to broaden traditional classifications of art and to exhibit a much wider array of artistic traditions than in the past. Folk and "ethnic" art have become part of the mainstream. In my view, new thinking and approaches in art history have had at least as great an influence in causing art museums and art historians to transcend old ideas about what is and what is not "art."

Museums and Money is an important book simply because there are so few books that deal with museum economics. If we better understood the macro-level economic trends that affect museums of all types, we could do a far better job anticipating and coping with change. I recommend this book for its historical perspective and background. I hope that similar, more contemporary, books will be written in the future, and that they will incorporate a more intimate knowledge of museums. **M**



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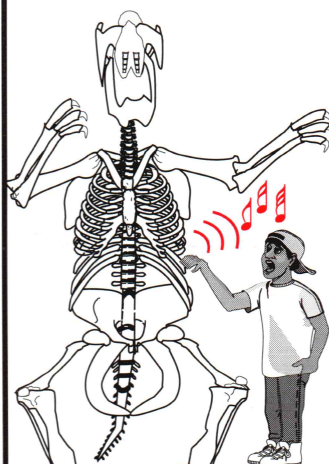
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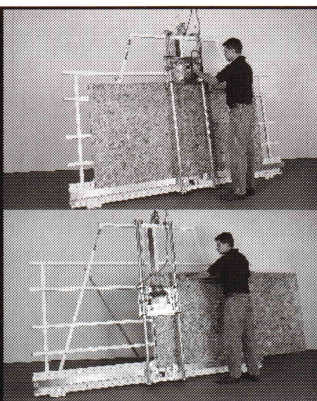
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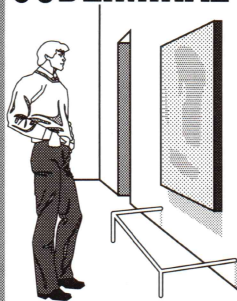
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Denver Museum *cont'd from page 46*

successful promotion was a trip to Beijing that involved a collaboration among the museum, a local television station, a department store, and an airline.

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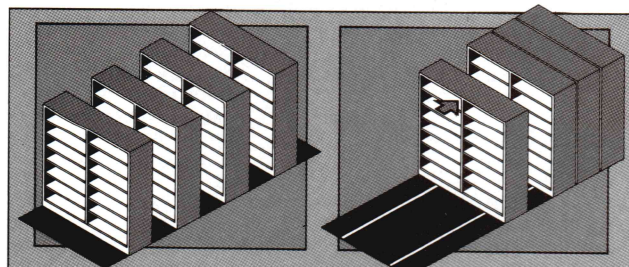
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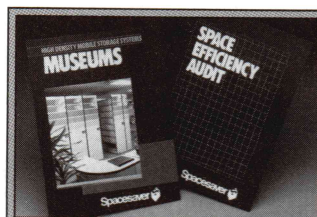
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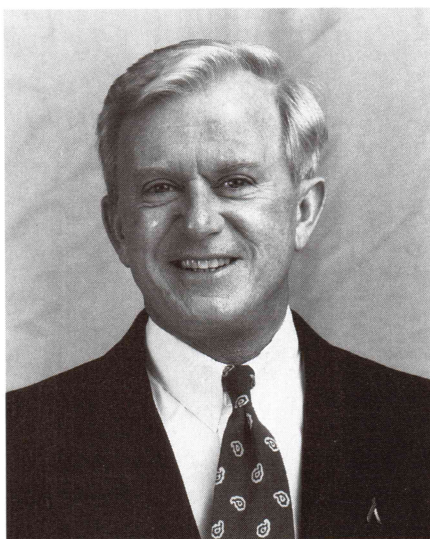
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Best Practices for Partnerships

BY EDWARD H. ABLE, JR.

The cover story in this issue of *Museum News* focuses on museums building partnerships with other organizations, an important component of the 1997 AAM Annual Meeting theme—"Competing in the Arena: Content, Creativity, and Cooperation." Mutually advantageous partnerships and collaborative arrangements are becoming increasingly important for cultural institutions as they struggle with decreasing financial support from the public sector and increasing expectations from audiences. Museums striving to form these new relationships face a long-standing challenge that now assumes new significance—ensuring that they are following the best standards and practices in the field. Any type of organization—whether it's a business, school, or library—that is considering a partnership with a museum wants assurance that it will be working with a well-run institution.

Part I of AAM's new strategic plan identifies a number of challenges and opportunities facing the museum field. One of these is the mounting pressure for museums to increase their accountability to a variety of stakeholders—the public, donors, and government—for the resources with which they have been entrusted. Another is the need to examine and appropriate the strategy of "best practices" that has become a widespread method for improving organizational performance in the for-profit sector. The strategic plan states that our institutions "will need to adopt this technique so that a knowledge of the 'best practices' to be found in high-performing museums can be disseminated as rapidly as possible to museums of every kind." The expectation for museums, therefore, is twofold: they must endeavor to operate at the highest standards of excellence, and they must be able to show potential partners and funders—as well as members of the community who visit their institutions—



Edward H. Able, Jr., is president and CEO of the American Association of Museums.

that they are doing so.

How can museums determine what these "best practices" are, and how can they find out what the most effective institutions are doing? By collecting and disseminating sample documents and information on museum standards and practices, AAM's Accreditation and Museum Standards department provides guidance to institutions grappling with just these sorts of questions. Through its Inquiry Database, the department's Technical Information Service (TIS) pinpoints the issues of greatest concern to the museum community at a given time. Museum professionals contact us seeking sample museum policies, guidelines, standards, and "best practices" in the profession, and TIS logs these inquiries into its database.

TIS staff then conduct research among AAM-accredited museums—which we *know* are operating at the highest standards—and determine how these institutions deal successfully with these issues. Using this information, TIS can answer queries from AAM members and can produce publications as part of the AAM Professional Practice Series. One

such recent publication—now available in the Spring 1997 AAM Bookstore Catalogue is *Museums, Trustees and Communities: Building Reciprocal Relationships*. This report addresses growing concern in the field about how well museum board composition, activities, and priorities reflect the communities they represent.

In order to assist museums eager to improve their performance, AAM relies upon a relationship between AAM Accreditation and Technical Information that is truly symbiotic. Institutions preparing for and participating in the accreditation process are provided with excellent tools for internal assessment and evaluation. And the high honor of AAM accreditation earns a museum external recognition that it has met a set of generally accepted professional standards, affirming the value of museums to society and clarifying the standards by which our institutions are judged. The pool of accredited museums, in turn, provides Technical Information Service staff with an invaluable resource for research and study.

I urge you, our AAM members, to become part of that healthy relationship—by taking steps towards accreditation if you have not already done so, and by availing yourself of the valuable information on standards and practices that the association offers.

Finally, I encourage *you* to provide *us* with information. If you let us know what you're concerned about, we can determine what it is that museums need to perform at their fullest potential.

By working together, we can develop good, solid information that museums can use to account for and speak with confidence about their positive economic, educational, and social effects on the community. That can only help as institutions seek to nurture new and exciting partnerships with other components of our diverse society. ■

Coda



Manuel Alvarez Bravo, *The Daughter of the Dancers (La hija de los danzantes)*, 1933. From "Manuel Alvarez Bravo," on display at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, through May 18, 1997.

"It was the simple documentation of the murals, paintings, and folk art objects . . . that was to further instill in Alvarez Bravo a deeper understanding and sympathy for the subjects of the works of art before his camera. The pictures were made, of course, without an inflection of personal expression; nevertheless, they required careful study for camera placement and lighting. They demanded an intensity of looking."

—Susan Kismaric

From *Manuel Alvarez Bravo*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1997.
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